

The
ultimate
guide to

GOING TO THE JOB INTERVIEW

Stand
out in a
crowded
market,
land a job
you love,
and take
control
of your
career.

Maren Kate

The
ultimate
guide to

GET NOTICE

Stand
out in a
crowded
market,
land a job
you love,
and take
control
of your
career.

Maren Kate

PUBLISHED BY INDE & CO.

Las Vegas, NV 89117

www.inde.co

COPYRIGHT © 2020 MAREN KATE DONOVAN

ISBN: 9781098334673

All rights reserved.

GOING REMOTE

Stand out in a crowded market, land a job you love, and take control of your career

First edition: September 1, 2020

Contributions by David C. Baker, Megan Berry, Andres Cajiao, Mike Del Ponte, Rupert Douglas, Tony Hsieh, Tamara Khan, Evan Walden, Bronnie Ware, Matt Wilkerson, Team Members: Lizzy Bannister, Mallika Bassi, Gillian Cienfuegos, Susan Donovan, Tara Espinoza, Cheryl Neuwirth, Meekin Owens, Natanin Rachapradit, and Kristin Vierra

Written by Maren Kate Donovan

Editing by Susan Donovan, Tara Espinoza, Cheryl Neuwirth, and Kristin Vierra

Formatting by Tara Espinoza

Cover by Jesse Flores

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
 PART 1: DISCOVERY	
 CHAPTER 1 : REMOTE FLUENCY®	8
 CHAPTER 2 : WHAT REALLY DRIVES YOU?	20
 CHAPTER 3 : YOUR CORE FOUR	30
 CHAPTER 4 : WHERE CAN YOU PROVIDE THE MOST VALUE?	37
 PART 2: WORKING IT	
 CHAPTER 5 : PROFESSIONAL POSITIONING	47
 CHAPTER 6 : THE PROVEN PROCESS	57
 CHAPTER 7 : NAILING THE APPLICATION PROCESS + INITIAL INTERVIEW	65
 CHAPTER 8 : WORKING YOUR NETWORK (EVEN IF IT'S NOT YOURS)	80
 CONCLUSION	92
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	94

Introduction

My mind was blank.

I was sitting in a small coffee shop, light jazz played over the sound system, and a couple nearby laughed together. I had been staring at my laptop's screen for what felt like hours. What was reflected back at me was a professional profile I'd created years back that needed a serious overhaul.

What am I good at?

What do I even want to DO?

The bell jingled. A large, tattooed man with a thick Boston accent had walked in and was ordering a coffee to go. For a minute, I let my mind wander ...

What did the tattoo guy do for a living?

He seemed to have purpose. Something which, at that point in my life, I worried I might never have again.

At 30, I felt completely lost. Less than a year before, I had been the CEO of a fast-growing start-up living with my boyfriend in a beautiful home in the heart of San Francisco. In the intervening months, I had been forced to lay off over 400 employees when we couldn't raise more capital, leaving me out of a job and ridden with guilt. Then a line of credit I had personally guaranteed came due, pushing me into personal bankruptcy. As if that wasn't enough, after a weekend spent "finding himself" in the desert, my partner of three years came home to tell me that our relationship wasn't making him happy anymore.

I had no job, no home, and no money.

And there I sat at the café, staring at a blinking cursor at the spot where my professional life was supposed to start over.

It took hours, but as I left the cafe later that evening, I knew two things.

First, I had to get out of San Francisco.

I had started my first business in college from a laptop before “remote” was a widely used term. The autonomous style of working for intense periods of time, from anywhere, made me incredibly happy and productive.

But over the years, as Zirtual grew, the siren song of venture capital and the rallying cry that “the smartest people in the world come to the Bay Area” clouded my perspective. That led me to abandon my original model of a fully distributed company and instead move our HQ into overpriced offices downtown.

I had been chasing optics versus results and stuck-in-an-office Maren was the least productive version of myself.

Second, I knew that I needed to figure out what I *really* wanted from my career and what (if anything) I was truly good at.

As an entrepreneur from a young age, I had done a lot—I’d started several businesses, one of which, at its peak, employed over 400 people and did almost a million dollars a month in revenue. I’d hired people from Bangladesh to British Columbia, wrote a popular blog, helped a hit TV show build their web presence. But because I’d done so many different things (and because my morale was shattered), I didn’t have a clue what my most valuable contribution to the working world was.

After that fateful day, I did leave San Francisco. My confidence slowly came back, and I eventually built another company, but I have often thought back to the version of Maren who was so lost in that coffee shop.

This book is written for that younger me, who wanted to Go Remote and land meaningful work but didn't have the map.

Remote Work Is Here to Stay

The ability to work remotely was accelerating before the pandemic, but now it's clear that we've reached a tipping point. Working from home is fast becoming the new normal.

On the upside, that means your career options just went from the limited available jobs within commuting distance to literally any open role in the world where you meet the requirements.

This is a game changer for professionals who crave flexibility—but it's also overwhelming.

How do you navigate the hiring process and land a great remote job when you may never meet face to face?

What opportunities are right for you?

How do your unique skill set, background, and experiences provide value to a potential employer?

How do you stand out in a sea of candidates?

And ...

Where do you start?

A Magic Pill

Imagine I give you a magic pill. Once you swallow it, you're transported to a world where you're doing meaningful work that ties into your goals, and you get to work from anywhere, be it a home office, coworking space, or a camper nestled in the woods.

Imagine having a clear understanding of your strengths and the ability to position yourself in a way that makes it easy for employers to see how *you* can solve *their* problems.

Imagine feeling in control of your career and enjoying the subtle confidence that if you choose to change jobs or even career paths, you have a playbook to follow. A step-by-step process that produces results, every time.

What would that magic pill be worth?

A month's salary? A year's? All your earnings over a decade?

What's in It for You

I've got good and bad news (but you probably saw the bad news coming).

That pill doesn't exist, *but* there is a proven process that, when executed consistently, will produce results that *feel* like magic.

It's a process that takes persistence, the desire to learn a new framework, and a bit of time—but for that relatively small investment, can change your career and life.

The good news is once you absorb the proven process and frameworks outlined in this book, you'll have a secret weapon that will give you a huge edge over your competition and inner confidence that you can always find great work.

Why Listen to Me

Over my career, I have been involved in hiring hundreds of people and seen countless more applications, ranging across industries, roles, and levels of experience.

I've launched three remote-first companies and have been lucky enough to work with brands ranging from 1-800-GOT-JUNK? to Calm.com.

Most importantly, I've felt the pain on both sides of the table.

I've been broke, stressed, and looking for a job where I could flourish, and I've been desperate to make a key hire, pouring through applications while doing the role myself out of pure necessity.

From vice presidents applying at snazzy technology start-ups to recent grads trying to get a foot in the door, the vast majority of professionals have no idea what they're *truly good at*. They have no idea how to *position themselves* in a way that solves potential employers' problems, and no idea that there is a *proven process* to landing great work. You simply have to *work it*.

I've seen this process work again and again. I've used it myself to go from a college dropout working at a dive bar, to earning a six-figure salary, consulting at cutting-edge tech startups, and most importantly, finding my life's calling: helping connect great people with meaningful work.

What This Is

Simply put, this is a framework, designed over a decade, to help you:

- **Discover** what your most valuable contribution (MVC) is and which companies or industries need it most
- **Position** yourself to stand out from the crowd and show potential employers how you, and you alone, can solve their most pressing problems
- **Work** the proven process to get the interview, wow hiring managers, and land the job

This is a practical guide. We will go step-by-step through each part, highlighting actionable content and providing templates for you to track your progress and reference during interviews.

What It's Not

This is not for the faint of heart, the lazy, or the person otherwise disinclined to put in the time and effort that it takes to land a great job.

Getting great work takes work.

In stable employment climates, when markets are bullish, and the bankers are popping champagne, it's possible to luck into one role after another (though rarely does that lead to fulfillment or decent employment options later in your career—see [the Peter principle](#)).

As the **first edition** of this guide goes to print, we are far, *far* from those good times. Due to a global pandemic, we are facing massive job losses across most industries and sectors.

This isn't the time to rest on your laurels. We are in sink-or-swim times.

You will get as much out of this book, and the framework it presents, as you put into it. It could change your career and alter your life, or you could relegate it to serving as a coaster.

Knowledge is power, but only when applied.

Next up ... If that sounds good, then let's get started! First, we'll dive into Remote Fluency® basics, which will help you survive and thrive in our new reality.



Part 1: Discovery

He who knows others is wise; he who knows himself is enlightened.—Lao Tzu

Chapter 1: Remote Fluency[®]

*Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.—Dorothy, in *The Wizard of Oz**

I'm sure no one needs to tell you that we're living in a radically different world from the one we toasted on New Year's Eve 2019. Remote work is here to stay and its adoption across sectors will only accelerate in the coming years.

[MIT recently reported](#) that a whopping 34% of Americans who previously commuted to work were working from home in April 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19. According to a recent [National Bureau of Economic Research](#) study, that is the same percentage of people who have jobs that can be done remotely.

If you're like me and enjoy the flexibility that remote work brings and find yourself more productive when self-directed, this shift can be exciting. But at the same time, the impetus for the dramatic shift to remote work in 2020 has been a global pandemic that has triggered historic unemployment—which is scary.

So, the good news is that over the next few years, a lot of jobs will shift to remote-first. The bad news is that the global economic hit from COVID-19 means many roles will disappear, while the competition for job opportunities will increase.

So, what's a professional to do?!

First, you must master the tools, disciplines, and habits that will let you thrive in a remote-work environment.

Second, to stand out and land great work in this new environment, you'll need to approach your job search from a completely new framework: from now on, **you** are your product.

The Goal

In this first chapter, we'll cover the basics of Remote Fluency®. Learning how to thrive in remote-work environments will future-proof your career and help you land new roles.

Remote Fluency® is for this decade what internet proficiency was in 2010. It's not a nice-to-have, it's a must-have if you want to succeed going forward.

The Remote Toolkit

To be successful as a remote professional, you must have a base level of technical savvy. If you're reading this and thinking, "Yep, got it, I live on my smartphone, subscribe to [Product Hunt](#), and save my team time by setting up [Zaps](#)," then you can probably skip ahead.

On the other hand, if the only part of that sentence you understood was "smartphone," then get cozy, and let's get you familiar with the platforms and tools used by remote teams.

Communication Tools

Instant Messaging

This is the main mode of communication for most remote professionals and remote teams. It also means you need to get really good at communicating via the written word—but more on that later. Popular instant messaging tools circa 2020 are:

- [Slack](#)
- [Telegram](#)
- [Microsoft Teams](#)

Voice + Video Calls

After written communication, the second and third most popular ways remote teams communicate with one another, clients, and vendors are through voice and, increasingly, video calls. We'll touch on etiquette for each in a subsequent section.

Popular video and voice call applications circa 2020 are:

- [Google Hangouts](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Skype](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)

Email

We all have one—or five. If you’re making the switch to remote, I highly recommend upping your email client game if you’re still using Yahoo or MSN (shudder). I kid you not, there are potential employers who set filters to disqualify candidates who have what they consider “out-of-date” email clients.

If you refuse to shift to Gmail, at least create a professional email (firstname@domain) associated with your personal site (we’ll cover how to create one of these later).

- [Gmail](#)
- [Mailbird](#)
- [Basecamp](#)
- [Superhuman](#)

Get Sh** Done Tools

Project Management

In a traditional office, you may have whiteboards, sticky notes, and spreadsheets tacked to the wall. In a fully remote environment, teams must manage everything through online tools that provide clarity on who is assigned to what, when it’s due, and whether it’s done right, giving a high-level overview of how this smaller piece fits into the bigger picture. Popular project management tools circa 2020 are:

- [Trello](#)
- [Asana](#)
- [Basecamp](#)
- [Ace Time Management Worksheet](#)

Documentation: Process + Efficiency

An analog version of this would be the filing cabinet. As a remote professional you'll be documenting everything in the cloud, from meeting notes to processes. It's important to not only get familiar with these tools but to build the habit of using them consistently. A good rule of thumb is if any task or process will be done more than once, or by more than one person, document it. Popular applications for this circa 2020 are:

- [Notion](#)
- [Google Docs](#)
- [Dropbox Paper](#)
- [Process Street](#)
- [Zapier](#)

Security

When your job is online, it's important to take extra precautions around security. As someone who has been hacked before, I promise you—it is not fun. Even more importantly, many companies will expect a baseline of security-consciousness since if you get hacked while you're working for them, they get hacked.

First, do this

- Keep prying eyes from creepin' with a [webcam cover](#)
- Check to see if your accounts have been breached using [Have I Been Pwned?](#)
- Deny mass collection of your online activity and trackers through [Disconnect](#)
- Review your digital footprint and clean it up by using [Mine](#)

Next, get a password manager

- [Have I Been Pwned?](#)
- [1Password](#)
- [Dashlane](#)

Your Habits + Home Office

I highly recommend that you designate a quiet, separate place as your office. During the shelter-in-place regulations of COVID-19, many people were thrown into remote work overnight and had to make do.

But if you're planning on making the shift permanent, it's important to set up a separate office. This could be a spare bedroom or a designated corner of your studio apartment with a curtain you can draw for privacy. Search "home office" on Pinterest, and you'll quickly see that with a little creativity you can carve out a workspace that you enjoy working from each day.

Work From Home (#WFH) Hardware

Below is a quick list of some of the things you will need to do your best work outside of a traditional office.

- A computer that actually works (there are many inexpensive, high-quality options from Dell PCs to Google Chromebooks)
- Internet connection with speeds of 100 Mbps or higher (test yours [here](#))
- Webcam (most new computers will have these embedded, but if not, there are a plethora of options on Amazon)
- Comfortable chair and desk set-up (an ergonomically optimized workspace helps you do better work by protecting your body from injury or recurring pain; [more here](#))
- Microphone and headset (depending on your job, it may be worth it to invest in a podcast-quality microphone and headphones or a simple multi-use headset that does both, like [these](#))
- Lighting to improve visibility when you're doing a video call (it's not just for [Instagram celebrities](#))
- An "On Air" sign. This can be a post-it note you stick to your door or a full-blown [radio-style sign](#). The goal is that anyone else in the household knows you are working and knows not to disturb you when you're "On Air."

Routines and Habits

Every successful remote worker has at least one thing in common: they create routines and build habits that allow them to get their best work done every day. My daily routine usually looks like this:

9 a.m.: Wakey wakey!

- Make bed (can't oversell this one)
- Short workout while listening to the news
- Make coffee
- "Walk to work" (which is usually a 15–20 minute walk wherever I am that leads me back to my "office" for the day)

10 a.m.: Start my workday

- The first two hours of the day I set aside for deep work and creative endeavors (such as writing this book)

Noon: Admin time

- I try to do a few email inbox sweeps throughout the day at specified times. I try not to keep my inbox open outside of those sweeps. This has been a practice I've deliberately crafted over a decade, so it won't work for everyone. But there is something magical about pushing off *reactive* work until after you've completed at least a little *proactive* task of your choosing.

12:30 p.m. to roughly 6 p.m.

Different days have different patterns ...

- Two days a week have large chunks blocked off for interviews (either me as interviewer of guests for our podcast [Inde on Air](#) or me as interviewee on someone else's podcast or by a journalist.)
- I currently run two businesses. This means I carve up my days to allow for focused chunks of time dedicated to a particular business and a particular function of that business. This helps me minimize the energy that is depleted during context shifting.

6 p.m.+: When I'm done, I'm done.

- Occasionally, I'll get a burst of creative energy before bed and quickly utilize it towards my highest-priority projects. But for the most part, when I sign off, I stay off. As a remote worker, it's important to create hard stops and boundaries, since the dark side of being able to work from anywhere—is ... that you have the option to never turn it off.

The Four Traits of Highly Effective Remote Workers

You may have the most epic home office in the world and all the cutting-edge technology that money can buy, but without cultivating these four traits you'll find yourself struggling.

1. Clear Communication

Clear, concise communication is one of the most important things to cultivate if you want to succeed in a remote-work environment. Regardless of your role, title, or experience—you won't get past the application stage if you can't clearly communicate.

Be Grammatical

Realize when you are applying for remote roles (or any job really) that the first impression you will make is through your writing. Any hiring manager worth their salt will quickly assess whether or not they should even browse your résumé by how you answer the first few questions.

Use a tool like [Grammarly](#) to check your spelling, but remember that these tools aren't omniscient and can be wrong, so double-check if something looks funky. Also, default to writing in full sentences until you gain rapport and get a better understanding of that company's specific style.

Be Concise

Get to the point. This is especially important when seeking a new job. It's easy for us to ramble, not realizing that the person who is reading our application is pouring over hundreds of others

just like yours each week. They are looking for a quick signal to either move you to the next stage or disqualify you. [Rupert Douglas](#), Senior Technical Recruiter at [GitLab](#), put it nicely:

“ Accurate, concise, and timely written communication skills are crucial if you’re going to succeed in a remote setting. Candidates who demonstrate this ability across their application process, from the content in their resume, cover letter or application form, through to technical interviews, and even in their emails with the recruiter do stand out.

Over-communicate to “Get on the Same Page”

In a remote environment, it is vital to over-communicate and reiterate. Develop the ability to take in what someone else said/wrote and then repeat it back to them for clarity. You may feel like a parrot at times, but that is far preferable to having two people leave a conversation with either:

(a) no idea what was committed to, or (b) two different interpretations.

Don’t be afraid to ask a “dumb” question in a one-on-one or meeting if it helps everyone get clear on what is being said and what is expected.

Remote Pro Tip: Before ending a conversation, whether on phone/video call or email/instant message, reiterate actionables: “Great, so my deliverables are X, Y, and Z” or “Just to confirm you need A and B from me by 12:30 p.m. PST?”

Escalate Medium for Clarity

Sometimes you may feel like it’s hard to get on the same page with someone. When this happens, instead of going back and forth over email or instant messaging, suggest that you two hop on a call.

To build rapport or navigate a tougher conversation that may be emotionally charged, opt for a video call or FaceTime. If you haven't done a lot of video calls in the past, it's worth spending the time and investing in the tools to become comfortable with a virtual face-to-face as it's becoming the new normal to not only get on the same page but build relationships and forge company culture when everyone is remote.

2. Self-Directed and Self-Disciplined

One of my jobs in college was working at a big-box store.

I had to clock in exactly on time, every day. Not too early—they didn't want me collecting fractions of my \$6.50 an hour wage while I waited for my shift to start—and definitely not a minute late.

Once clocked in, I could run much of my day on autopilot. I had two breaks, and the rest of the time I stood behind a cash register, pointing a little gun at various tags, smiling vaguely, and doing a terrible job pitching the in-store credit card.

I hated that job. Not only because the khakis didn't flatter my figure, but because my preferred work method is more self-directed.

Self-directedness is a personality trait of self-determination, that is, the ability to regulate and adapt behavior to the demands of a situation in order to achieve personally chosen goals and values. [It has been] described ... as "willpower."... Self-directedness is conceptually related to [locus of control](#).—This material comes from the "Self-directedness" article on [Wikipedia](#).

Compare my time at Target (crap, the secret is out) to my day-to-day as a remote professional and entrepreneur. Each day I must evaluate which actions will provide the most value and eventually lead to reaching my goals. Then, I must be self-disciplined enough to carry out those actions instead of, say, ... heading to the pool to work on my tan.

The great part is that when you cultivate self-direction and discipline, you will see an amazing impact on your life far beyond just your work. These traits lead to becoming *the master of your fate, and the captain of your soul* (adapted from [Invictus](#) by William Ernest Henley).

3. Cultivating Curiosity

If you've ever watched the classic boiler-room drama, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, you know that the ABC they drove home was: "[Always Be Closing](#)."

If you're looking to make the shift to remote work, the ABC you should never forget is: "Always Be Curious."

One of the core components that allows remote professionals to work from home, a cafe, or an RV, is technology; and that technology is *a/ways* evolving. Computers, smartphones, and software are constantly changing, and newer systems always overtake their predecessors. Today we send messages on Slack, do video calls on Zoom, and use a [Chromebook](#)—but in a few years all of these tools will have evolved or died out.

It's essential as a remote professional that you cultivate curiosity, especially around technology, so that you become a lifelong learner and are never left behind when the next generation of tools inevitably makes what you're using today obsolete.

4. Etiquette Is Everything

The quick version is: wear pants, use headphones, and mute yourself when you aren't talking.

Call Etiquette

Regardless of whether you are on a video call or conference call, it's important to:

- Use headphones
- Mute yourself when you are not talking
- Be in a quiet space

- State “This is [YOUR NAME]” before you start speaking when you’re on a call with more than a few people, so everyone is on the same page.

Video Etiquette

- Mute yourself when you aren’t talking
- Make sure you’re in a quiet space
- Present yourself the way you would in-office (working from home is not an excuse to let personal hygiene slip or to live in pajamas)
- Do not be one of [these cats](#)

On Timeliness

One quote summarizes everything you need to know about timeliness and how it relates to the world of remote work.

“Early is on time, on time is late and late is unacceptable!”—Eric Jerome Dickey

Key Takeaway

Whether it’s your first time considering a fully remote role, or you’ve been working from home for years, it’s important to remember that remote-first is structurally different from traditional in-office employment.

I call this difference “**Remote Fluency**®.”

Remote Fluency® consists of:

- Learning the technology that is important for your work and cultivating the curiosity that will allow you to stay relevant
- A solid “virtual office” set-up (whether it’s your home, a coworking space, or a briefcase that holds all your tools as you hitchhike across America—I’ve seen it, it’s a thing!)
- The routines and habits that set the stage for you to do your best work, consistently
- Clear communication

- Self-directed and self-disciplined
- Using proper etiquette when engaging with others

It takes time and discipline to build your remote-work muscle, but after a while, it will become second nature. Revisit this chapter once you've landed your new role, then integrate some of the suggestions into your new routine and see what works for you.

Next up ... We'll explore what drives you, from your Career Drivers to your Personal Core Values, which will give you a compass to navigate your job search and focus on roles that are truly meaningful to you.

Extended Resources & Reading

Cultivate curiosity by keeping up with trends on [Product Hunt](#) or [Reddit](#). Dig deeper on any specific topic through [Udemy](#), [MasterClass](#), or [Lynda](#), and tune into great podcasts like the [Knowledge Project](#) or [Indie Hackers](#) to help you future-proof your career through learning.

- [Optimize: Deep Work with Cal Newport on OPTIMIZE with Brian Johnson](#) (interview, 30 minutes)
- [Manage Your Day-to-Day](#) by Jocelyn K. Gleib (short book)
- [The Power of Habit](#) by Charlie Duhigg (full book)

Chapter 2: What Really Drives You?

Years ago, Bronnie Ware was working as a palliative care nurse in Australia, caring for patients during the last few months of their lives.

She was struck by the fact that the dying often voiced similar regrets when talking about their lives, so Bronnie began recording these epiphanies in a blog. Her posts went on to gain so much attention that she decided to publish a book called [*The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*](#).

So, what was the number one regret?

I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

As we dive into this chapter, laying the foundation for you to take control of your career, keep this refrain in mind. Look at your current life and try to separate out what others expect of you (family, friends, culture, society, dogma) and how/if it differs from what you expect of yourself.

The Average Adult Spends 90,000 Hours of Their Life at Work

That's 5,400,000 minutes ... and that's just the average. If you have a job that requires long hours or juggle more than one role to make ends meet, your number is likely higher.

Realizing how much of our waking life is spent at work begs the question: *How much thought do we put into where those hours are spent, and what they're spent doing?*

Being true to yourself comes in many forms. Too often we approach our *work*-life and our *life*-life as two separate entities when, in reality, they are just different sides of the same coin.

If you are one person at work and a completely different person at home, you aren't being true to yourself. This doesn't mean that you will always love what you do for a living; sometimes you

just need to keep a roof over your head or support a family. But it does mean that if you take the time to understand what really drives you, you'll have a much better chance of being *true to yourself* at work and at home.

The brutal truth is that most people will never think deeply about the *why* behind their career path **until it's too late**.

The Goal

Before jumping into the job search process, it's important to take a step back and get clear on what you really want. This is the most important, and most overlooked, part of the process.

In this chapter, we'll uncover your Personal Core Values and Career Drivers. Understanding what really drives you, both personally and professionally, will make the job search process easier to navigate. It will help zero in on better opportunities and allow you to position yourself to stand out from the crowd.

But most importantly, it'll help you be truer to yourself during your 90,000+ hours of work, and with a little luck, spend more of it doing things you love.

Your Personal Core Values

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.—Aristotle

You've probably heard the term "core values" before, but most likely in reference to a company. Online retailer Zappos is famous for its focus culture that springs from the [10 core values that they live by](#).

Alternatively, if you're old enough to remember Enron, you may have gotten a laugh when it came to light that their four core values were:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Communication
- Excellence

Considering Enron ended in lies and scandal, this highlights the fact that values are only *valuable* if they are upheld. So, before you brush off your resume or fire up the ol' search engine, it's important to zero in on your Personal Core Values (PCVs) first.

Being clear on your PCVs as you begin your job search will make it easier for you to filter companies, roles, and teams that you'll thrive in. It will also create a simple decision matrix that you can use to analyze opportunities at any stage in the hiring process, and lastly, it'll give you a deeper understanding of your *true self*.

How to Create Your PCVs

Below is a look at my 2020 Personal Core Values. I like to review my PCVs every birthday to make sure nothing major has changed and see if I upheld those values during the inflection points throughout that last year.

Maren's Personal Core Values (2020)

HONESTY

*with myself, *with others

Honesty manifests itself through:

- Authentic and open communication
- Knowing what I need and want, then clearly communicating it to others without fear
- Saying nothing behind someone's back that I wouldn't say to their face

LOVING DEEPLY

*God, *myself, *others

- loving kindness
- Keeping an open heart
- Nurturing meaningful relationships

CHOOSING TO LIVE IN A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE

*wealth, *health, *love, *opportunities

Living in a world of abundance manifests itself through:

- Choosing to see possibilities versus pitfalls
- Focusing on “feeling” abundance
- Expecting the best

GROWTH

*spiritual, *intellectual, *personal

Growth manifests itself through:

- Curiosity and constant learning
- Exploration, adventure, and travel
- Properly processing pain and hurt through my emotional waste management system
(adapted from [The Clarity Cleanse](#) work for people)
- Connecting people with meaningful work
- Helping the vulnerable

Everyone’s PCVs will be different. This is simply an example of mine at the time of writing.

Also, remember we are *all* human. I am constantly fumbling and not upholding my core values. The best part of having them written down is that when a situation occurs and my actions diverge from the core values I want to uphold, I’m able to reverse-architect where things went wrong and, with some personal grace, commit to being better next time.

Now let’s dig into how to create your own PCV list.

Step 1: Piece o' Paper

While on a trip to Bali, I first realized that I needed to put my values down on paper and commit to them. So, I extended my stay by a week and each morning walked to a local cafe where I journaled and gave myself the space to reflect on what my Personal Core Values really were.

If at all possible, set aside as much as a week for this process. Start with a piece of paper, or if you prefer taking your notes in digital form use the note app on your phone or a Google Doc, and begin writing down as many potential values as you can think of.

As you review these day after day, you'll start noticing a couple that really resonate with the best version of you. Begin drafting those into the format below to filter the ones that are most important. I've also created a worksheet in [this packet](#) to guide you through this process.

Step 2: PCV Format

Core values follow the "less is more" principle. Try to boil them down until you have the minimum number that actually reflect who you want to be and your moral compass. You want to know your core values like the back of your hand.

VALUE TEMPLATE

*simple explainer or descriptor

"Value 1" manifests itself through:

- Specific example of what this value looks like in action
- Specific example of what this value looks like in action
- Specific example of what this value looks like in action

If you can't easily memorize and internalize your PCVs, you've created too many.

Step 3: Stress-Test It

Think of several situations where a decision had to be made that wasn't easy.

1. Jot down up to a dozen—the more and varied each example the better.
2. Then in retrospect decide whether you were pleased or displeased with the outcome.
Was it “good” or “bad” from your perspective?
3. Now apply one or more of your values to each situation.
4. Is the result the same? Different?
5. How do you feel about that outcome?

Note: It may not make you happy, but there is a difference between feeling good about an outcome—“I did all I could and was true to myself”—versus “That was the outcome I wanted.” Think of confessing your love to someone who doesn’t reciprocate. It may be a painful outcome, but at least you were true to yourself and are now free to move on.

How PCVs Can Impact Your Job Search

Perhaps there is an opportunity at a healthcare company that is changing lives, but as you go through the interview process you realize the person you’d be reporting to is dishonest in his dealings. If honesty is part of your PCVs, that may be a deal killer.

Maybe “spending time with family” is one of your values. This may mean you don’t go after an awesome position at a fast-growing startup because as you read Glassdoor reviews and speak to the hiring manager, you realize they are expecting 60+ hour workweeks.

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to your Personal Core Values, but investing the time to understand what your PCVs are and then checking in yearly will not only benefit your career but will lead to a life where you are true to yourself.

Your Career Drivers

Now that you have a better sense of your Personal Core Values, let’s dig into your Career Drivers and differentiate between needs and nice-to-haves. This will help create a decision framework in which to compare opportunities once you start the proven process.

We've broken your Career Drivers into five buckets: **Money**, **Lifestyle**, **Culture**, **Environment**, and **Growth Opportunities**. Read through each, then follow the instructions and document your results in our Career Drivers Worksheet, which you can download [here](#).

Money

As Wu-Tang Clan aptly put it in their hit song C.R.E.A.M., "Cash rules everything around me." But money means different things to different people, especially depending on your stage in life. Without overthinking it, rank the three options below in order of most important to least.

- ☐ **Cash compensation** (explainer: This would be your base salary, be it PT, FT, or hourly.)
- ☐ **Bonus** (explainer: This often applies in sales roles and some managerial or more senior roles.)
- ☐ **Equity or similar vehicle** (explainer: At larger publicly traded companies, or at startups, you may be offered some form of equity or "ownership," whether this is stock or a similar financial vehicle.)

Lifestyle

Do you work to live? Or do you live to work? There's no right answer to this and it may change based on circumstances. I've found it helps to talk through each of these with a confidante or partner, then document your answers so you can reference them during the interview process.

- What does work/life balance mean to you?
- How far would you commute for your perfect job?
- Would you sacrifice money for more vacation or time off?
- Would you sacrifice time and lifestyle for more money?
- What is the minimum amount of vacation/PTO you need a year? (Note: On average, in the United States workers receive a standard 10 or days a year. The number of paid vacation days increases slightly as tenure with the current employer increases.)

Culture

You've done the heavy lifting on this one already by defining your Personal Core Values. Look back over your PCV worksheets as you think through the following questions:

- What types of company missions excite you?
- What are deal-breakers for you culturally?
- Are there organizations that you admire from a cultural standpoint?
- What types of people do you want to work with?
- What types of people do you not want to work with in the future? (It's helpful to think of examples of specific people from the past and try to identify patterns.)

Environment

This is something people often overlook when thinking about their next move, but it's vitally important to your productivity and happiness in a specific role.

- What type of environment do you prefer, on a 0 to 10 scale of rigid to flexible?
 - *0: a clock-in, clock-out call center*
 - *10: an engineer who works fully remote with no meetings and just ships code*
- What percentage of time are you willing to spend traveling for work?
- What type of structure do you thrive in?
 - *Corporate (very structured)*
 - *Medium-sized family businesses*
 - *Start-ups (incredibly loose and often chaotic)*

Growth Opportunities

As you think through your Career Drivers, it's important to be realistic about where you are currently, while looking at where you want to be in the future. Everyone values growth opportunities differently, but at certain times in your career, the ability to grow (learn new skills, get experience, level up) may outrank other considerations.

These times may apply to, but are not limited to, recent grads or those just joining the workforce, someone who is making a career pivot, and economic climates where you have to level up in order to secure a job in the future. In one sitting, and without overthinking it, work through the following questions:

- What stage are you at in your career?
 - First job
 - Early (2–5 years)
 - Mid (5–10 years)
 - Experienced (10+ years)
 - Rejoining workforce
- Are you in a career pivot?
 - Industry switch
 - Role switch
 - Both?
- Is there a certain goal or title you want to reach in this role you want to reach in this role at some point? Or within the next five years?

Rank 0 to 10

- How important is having a mentor in your next role?
- How important is being able to mentor others in your next role?
- How important is upward mobility in this role within the next four years?
- How important is it to have opportunities for continued learning & development?

For Those Early in Their Career, Making a Career Pivot, or Rejoining the Workforce

“ When you are early in your career choose roles that give you experience over cash. Think of each job as an inch on your resume. You need the first one, to get the second one, the second will help get the third ...

Other things to consider are the company's brand; is this a role that will give you experience and work you can point to? Considering the size of the firm as well, a smaller company or startup means you will get more responsibility and be involved in more aspects of the business.—[Tamara Khan](#), Product Strategist & Healthcare Entrepreneur

Key Takeaway

Take the time to think through your Personal Core Values and Career Drivers before moving on to the next step.

Whether you fill out the worksheets that come with this book, or write your Career Drivers down on sticky notes and post them on your monitor, make sure they are easy to reference as you start your job search. A solid understanding of your PCVs and Career Drivers will help you:

- Prioritize opportunities
- Evaluate competing job offers
- Invest more time in applying to roles that align strongly with your values and drivers
- Have the courage to live a life true to yourself ... not the life others expected of you

Next up ... I'll introduce you to the "Core Four" framework, so we can tease out your top skills and understand where you, and you alone, can add the most value.

Extended Resources & Reading

- [Start with Why](#) (TED talk)
- [Understanding What Drives You](#) by Jim Kwiki (blog post)
- [Overview of "Drive"](#) by Daniel Pink (video)

Chapter 3: Your Core Four

In the performing arts, there is a concept called the “Triple Threat,” meaning someone who is proficient in three important skills within their particular field.

Take Hugh Jackman. He’s proved himself as a gifted actor in films like *Les Misérables* and *X-Men*. But he also spent time developing natural abilities around song and dance, parlaying them into several musicals as well as hosting both the Oscars and the Tony Awards.

Triple Threats, across disciplines, are more successful and versatile than their counterparts. The combination of multiple skills within a given field makes it easier for them to contribute to a variety of projects and stand out in the mind of potential employers.

While the performing arts has the Triple Threats concept, as a remote professional you have a unique mix of skill sets that I like to call your “Core Four.”

The Goal

In this chapter, we’ll tease out where you truly excel professionally using the Core Four framework. We’ll start by understanding your strengths and weaknesses as well as interests and non-interests. It may sound obvious, but most people don’t have a true understanding of what they’re good at and, just as importantly, what they are naturally not inclined towards or not interested in.

Getting clear on your Core Four is a game changer. It will make it easier to position yourself in the minds of your target (recruiters, hiring managers, referrals) and increases the chances of finding opportunities where you’ll thrive.

Finding Your “Core Four”

Check out the supplemental packet that accompanies this book and you’ll find the S-W-I-NI Matrix Worksheet. Print it out or follow along with a piece of paper as you read.

Step 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Interests, and Non-Interests Matrix

Grab a piece of paper, draw a square, then without overthinking it, jot down what comes to mind when you think of what you’re good at, what you’re not good at, what you are interested in, and what you’re not interested in.

Good at

On an episode of [Inde on Air](#) we spoke with [Shannon Waller](#) from Strategic Coach. One thing Shannon said that stuck with me is that “everyone has a unique ability.” As you think through what you’re good at, it may be worth investing in the [Unique Ability®](#) assessment, or the [CliftonStrengths](#) through a series of questions gives insight into your “talent DNA.”

Another great way of sussing out your strengths is talking to a cross section of people who you’ve worked with over the years. Ideally, this consists of those you reported to, peers, and people who reported to you. This could also be mentors, professors, or other professionals who you’ve worked with on projects if you’re a freelancer.

Not Good at

This one should be obvious, but while you’re talking to your network, be sure to ask about your weaknesses. This isn’t a time to seek praise; you want the brutal truth so you can understand what your true genius is.

What we aren’t naturally inclined to do or be often drains our energy and feels far more difficult to drudge through than it does for some of our peers. Try to think of parts of your day or workweek which you dread; often this will shine a light on a weakness.

Interested in

As simple as it sounds, it doesn't matter whether you are good, bad, or adequate at these tasks. These are things you simply enjoy and are interested in learning more about.

Not Interested in

This is something you're good or adequate at but don't want to do anymore. This will change, depending on your career stage.

When you're just starting off, you should try a lot of things to gain a basic level of competency. But as you progress further in your career or niche, it is counterproductive to do things that you're not interested in when you could put that energy towards work you excel at.

Example of My Own Matrix

Good at ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Written communications-Building scalable systems-Recruiting operations-Ideating on new products, services, concepts-Mobilizing people through a shared vision (leadership)-Building management structures for distributed teams	Not good at ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Detail orientation-Following written instructions-Marketing execution-Sales strategy-Technical stuff (HTML, coding, databases)
Interested in ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Future of work-Economics-Organizational psychology-Product design-Supply chain & logistics-Writing	Not interested in ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">-HR.-Administrative work-Nitty-gritty details-Repetitive tasks-Legal

Step 2: Teasing Out Your Core Four

Now it's time to sit back and review what we've come up with. I suggest sleeping on it for a night or two, speaking to people who you've engaged with professionally, and perhaps taking a few of the assessments listed in the resources section of this chapter.

Write it down

Then with a fresh mind, write down your top four strengths. Don't worry about stack ranking them yet. Just get them on paper.

Mine started like this:

- Building scalable systems
- Written communications
- Ideating on new products, services, concepts
- Mobilizing people through a shared vision (leadership)

Now, Stack Rank Your Strengths

You may immediately have a sense of what your leading strength is, but if you don't, spend some time thinking through everything you've done (from childhood onward) and look for prominent themes. Again, don't rush this (take a nap, go for a walk, go on a weekend getaway) and the sequence will become clear.

Mine evolved into:

1. Leadership (mobilizing people through a shared vision)
2. Building scalable systems
3. ~~Written~~ communications
4. Ideating on new products, services, concepts

The week I wrote this chapter, after speaking with several people who knew me, I realized that even though I enjoy writing, *written communication* is not my true skill. Instead, communication in general is where I thrive.

Step 3: Cut the Fluff and Commit

Lastly, we are going to take our four strengths and cut them down to their absolutely most basic level. This will be helpful when we position ourselves to hiring managers and to quickly remember our Core Four in our daily lives.

My final Core Four looked like this:

1. Leadership
2. Building scalable systems
3. Communicating
4. Ideating

The Struggle Bus

Sometimes it's difficult to hone in on your strengths or unique abilities. This is totally normal and part of the process.

Often this happens when you're early in your career or looking to make a functional or field change.

- If you work in finance but have mostly worked in healthcare, a **field change** would be looking for roles at software startups.
- Alternatively, if you've always been on the operations side of things at software startups, a **functional change** would be becoming a product manager.

Wherever you are in your career stage, it's incredibly helpful to speak with people who are in the field you want to move to or those actually doing a role that interests you. They can give you a sense of what it will take skill- and experience-wise while sharing a boots-on-the-ground view of what the role/field is really like.

I'd suggest tapping your network first to find these people. Even a cold (yet authentic) message

on LinkedIn to someone you admire often does the trick. Be upfront about why you want to speak with them and ask for a specific amount of time: “I’d love to grab 15 minutes of your time.” But if you can’t find the right contacts through your network, consider a tool like [Clarity](#) to schedule a chat with an expert—the only catch is it will cost you a little bit of dough.

Key Takeaway

Each of us possesses a specific combination of skills, personality traits, and experiences that makes us uniquely positioned to solve an employer’s problems. The first step of finding out what that is, and then communicating your solution to a potential employer, is understanding your Core Four, as well as where your interests lie and what you don’t want to do more of.

This level of self-reflection will show in the interview process and put you head and shoulders above your competition. Keep this exercise up over the years (similar to my PCVs, I like to revisit my Core Four once a year on my birthday) and you will begin to see deeper patterns and become even better at your Core Four—or evolve them.

Next up ... We’ll take a look at the larger job market, and fields of interest to you, and then overlap your Core Four to figure out what your Most Valuable Contribution really is.

Extended Resources & Reading

➤ [Kolbe test](#) (paid)

The Kolbe A Index (instinct test) is unique. It does not measure intelligence, personality, or social style. It measures the instinctive ways you take action when you strive. Your result will describe your natural strengths—your modus operandi (MO).

➤ [Unique Ability®](#) (paid)

Begin your journey to finding purpose in life and getting closer to the heart of what drives you.

- [CliftonStrengths](#) (paid)

Based on 34 themes, CliftonStrengths identifies your talent DNA by uncovering your natural potential.

- [16Personalities](#) (free)

Take this personality test and get a “freakishly accurate” description of who you are and why you do things the way you do.

Chapter 4: Where Can You Provide the Most Value?

*We make a living by what we get, but we
make a life by what we give.*—Winston Churchill

Each of us can provide value (in differing amounts) across multiple roles and industries.

You may be interested to know that I am an excellent dishwasher. As a teenager, I learned to use the industrial dishwashing machines (if you've ever worked in the back of a restaurant you know exactly what I mean) and something about the efficiency and smell of chemically cleaned dishes struck my fancy.

Yet, if I were to search for a new job, dishwashing wouldn't be on my short list.

Why?

The same reason why, over time, my dishwashing stints grew fewer and farther at the restaurants I worked at. This happened because my managers quickly noticed that I provided more (monetary) value behind the cash register or waiting tables than scrubbing dishes. Though I enjoyed it, and it was essential to running the business, my most valuable contribution lay elsewhere.

Now, waitressing or manning a cash register wouldn't be my Most Valuable Contribution (MVC), either. The skills I've honed and experiences I've had mean if I want to make the most impact, I would leverage them to do a different type of work. It would be work that's more meaningful to me, and also produce a better economic return (cold hard cash, baby).

This is why your MVC isn't based on what jobs you *can* do, but instead, where you can *provide the most value* while receiving the most value in return (in the form of compensation and job satisfaction).

The Goal

In this chapter, we'll tease out your Most Valuable Contribution (MVC). Your MVC can be found by applying your Core Four, unique experiences (both professional and personal), and your interests to:

- Solve a valuable problem
- Alleviate a real pain
- Help achieve a meaningful goal or mission

It's when you do one or more of these for an employer who can fulfill your most important Career Drivers while aligning with your Personal Core Values that you land on your MVC—magic happens.

Finding Your MVC

First, look back over what you're good at and what you're interested in, then think through your work experiences to date.

I like to approach finding your Most Valuable Contribution through the lens of problem-solving. For our purposes, we'll bucket these problems into three categories:

- Big problems
- Underlying causes
- Employer-specific pain points

Big Problems, Underlying Causes, and Employer-Specific Pain Points

Big Problems (think global or high-level)

- Environmental issues such as global warming
- Access to healthcare
- Affordable housing

- Poverty

Let's say you're particularly drawn to helping eliminate poverty. Once you've selected that big problem, you'd begin to drill down to the **Underlying Causes** that are creating the larger issue. There are varying lists of the causes of poverty; it takes a few web searches to come up with five to 10 underlying causes, like:

- Lack of good jobs/job growth
- Lack of access to education
- Warfare/conflict
- Lack of food and water
- Lack of infrastructure

Now you can cross-reference your interests and experience to highlight potential opportunities for employers who are addressing one or more of these specific problems. This could be edtech startups, nonprofit organizations, or major corporations who are working to make access to free internet ubiquitous. Create a list of these firms and then begin to think through what **Employer-Specific Problems** they have that your Core Four and background could help solve.

Imagine *Acme EdTech* is developing incredibly affordable K–12 courses through a combination of virtual interaction with teachers and gamification to keep kids engaged when they have to learn from home (as so many do post-pandemic).

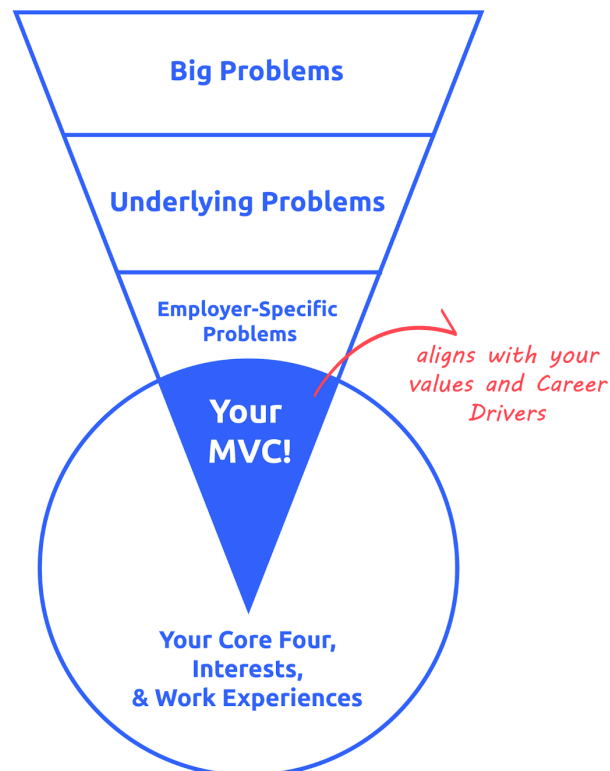
Acme EdTech probably has a lot of specific pain points that, depending on your skills, experience, and interests, you could help solve. I can imagine a few may be ...

- Finance
 - Raising capital
 - Keeping costs in check
 - Payroll and ensuring *Acme EdTech* is in compliance with state and local contractor laws

- Marketing
 - Building awareness with parents
 - Content creation
 - Paid advertising
- Partnerships with government agencies
- Operations
- Engineering and product design

Applying Your Core Four, Experiences, and Interests

Once you do this with a few areas you're interested in, overlapping opportunities with your Core Four and unique experiences, you'll have a fat list of potential firms to target and a list of ways to make valuable contributions by solving a problem, alleviating a pain, or helping that employer achieve their mission.



Optimize Your MVC by Choosing a Growing Industry

The job market behaves like any market; at the end of the day it boils down to supply and demand.

You, as the professional, are trading something of value (or perceived value) for something that you want in return (money, status, equity, a chance to change the world). Thus, the more in-demand your offering, the more opportunities you will have to “trade” for what you want.

There was a huge demand for drivers or delivery runners in the early days of startups like Uber or Postmates, but the “ability” to drive or drop off something isn’t difficult to replicate. As soon as they built out their recruiting and operation functions, there were increasingly more drivers or delivery runners, which meant no one made as much. The lesson? Don’t be interchangeable.

What types of jobs are likely to be relevant over the next 30 years? Even if you’re 18 years old now, some combination of these skills will take you into retirement (assuming that’s still a thing when you’re old ... my dear young friend). Some areas with potential staying power are below:

- Building sh** = engineering
- Storytelling = communication, writing skills, language skills
- Stuff robots have a hard time doing = skilled labor, tasks that are ambiguous or change often
- Being able to deal with humans = HR, listening, networking, recruiting
- Leadership = the always-valuable ability to get others excited about a vision or mission and then do the work to achieve it

What types of sectors will start or continue to grow? As of the publication of the first edition of this book, these are hiring fast:

- Healthcare
- Health-tech (often startups)
- Software and services that help businesses navigate remote work

- Transportation & logistics
- E-commerce (big businesses like Amazon and eBay have enjoyed record growth)
- Social media (Twitter, TikTok, etc.)
- Edtech/online learning

Alternatively, there have been massive layoffs and industry contractions in travel and hospitality. If this is your space, never fear, because what will set you apart from the crowd is the ability to look at the foundational work we did in Chapters 1–3 and recast yourself in a sector that is growing.

Take action!

The industry you started in may not be around 20 years into your career. That’s why it’s important to get a pulse on the local and global job market to understand where you can provide the most value. Sometimes this will require a career pivot, while at other times it means going niche within your existing field. Grab a coffee or take a walk and spend 30 minutes brainstorming the following questions.

- Do a gut check on the spaces you’ve worked in in the last five to 10 years (or the space you’re aiming for). Are they growing or shrinking?
- What industries are expanding now, or will in the future? Which excite you?
- How could you re-apply your Core Four to the fastest-growing industries?

Wants Versus Needs

The ability to solve an urgent need is more in demand than satisfying a want, but this doesn’t mean people haven’t built meaningful careers and businesses around delivering what the world “wants” or what is “nice to have.”

Does the world need another high-end fashion boutique?

Probably not, but perhaps that high-end boutique staffs its store with people who *need* the work. Or, perhaps they purchase part of their inventory from [Nomi Network](#), an organization that provides employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to women who have only known a life of sex-trafficking. Sometimes a need is indirectly fulfilled by a want.

Internships and Apprenticeships

This is specifically for new grads, those without a lot of work history, and those rejoining the workforce during a recession.

I interviewed Matt Wilkerson, CEO of Paragon One, during my time of sheltering in place. [Paragon One](#) is a remote career coaching platform that recreates the internship experience by pairing top executives with students in higher education to help them find internships and jobs. He mentioned that a great way of getting work is to put yourself out there, whether there are posted job opportunities or not:

“ If you can't find an open role and at a company you feel drawn to, then try going directly to someone in charge and pitching yourself for a job that doesn't exist yet. The advice I would give is, don't be afraid to think of how you can provide value—wedge yourself in. When I think about the best people that I've ever hired, so many of them started off by cold-emailing me. Sometimes we didn't even have a job posting, but they sent me an email. Not a super-long email, it wasn't an essay; instead it was something they had studied about what we were doing and highlighted a place where they could help.

They'd say, 'Hey, I can do XYZ' ... or maybe they went ahead and did a small project and decided to share it with me. It's like they do the screening for me. Those are the people I interview first and they tend to be the best people to hire.

Matt also made a generous offer at the end of the interview (which if I were looking for work right now I would definitely take him up on); [listen](#) and check it out.

Later I spoke with Andrés Cajiao, cofounder at [Torre](#), a professional network for remote work.

Andrés reiterated Matt's comments when he mentioned that in his mind there are two kinds of professionals: "those who can create jobs for themselves and the ones that can't." You can find the full interview with Andrés and transcript [here](#).

If you are a recent grad or getting back into the workforce after some time off, this is probably the single most important tactic you can adopt to land meaningful remote work. Sometimes you'll have to work for free for a bit to get a foot in the door. I call this "karma-banking" because you are making an investment of your time, assuming that whether it leads to a direct job or reference, something good will come back to you at the end of the experience.

This is why it's so important to understand your MVC, regardless of the stage in your career. Following the advice of Matt and Andrés can get you:

- References
- Referrals
- Real projects to show future employers
- Employment opportunities at that company or others

Key Takeaway

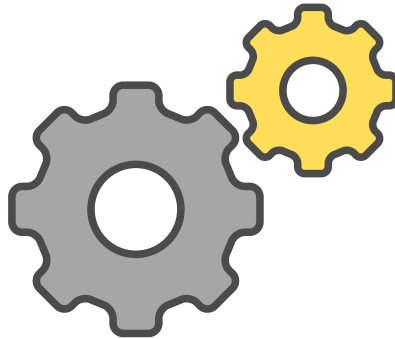
Get clear on your Most Valuable Contribution (MVC) and do the legwork to find industries and employers where you can solve a problem, alleviate a real pain point, or help them achieve a meaningful goal. This will make finding meaningful work fast, easy, and more enjoyable.

It also sets you up to compare opportunities where you can use your MVC to see which fulfill your most important Career Drivers and align with your PCVs. This will make contract negotiation easier and result in doing work you love.

Next up ... You've put in the work and laid the foundation. Now for the fun part, it's time to *work* the proven process by professionally positioning yourself through job search materials that will wow potential employers.

Extended Resources & Reading

- Ben Todd and the nonprofit [80,000 Hours](#) team walk you through how to understand not only where you'll excel but also how your career can positively impact the world.
- [Wait But Why](#)—If you aren't already reading Tim Urban's epic blog *Wait But Why* for career advice, then you should start. Tim dives deep into relevant topics without being boring and is forking hilarious. You're welcome.
- [“So Good They Can't Ignore You | Cal Newport | Talks at Google” by Talks at Google](#) (video)
- Future proofing career with soft skills How to future proof your career through the development of soft skills [A Whole New Mind summary](#) (post)



Part 2: Working It

Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.

—Dale Carnegie, American business icon

Do ... or do not. There is no try.—Yoda

Chapter 5: Professional Positioning

Why do we buy Apple AirPods versus a generic alternative on Amazon?

Quality? Perhaps, though as someone who is on their third pair, I may beg to differ.

In reality most consumers buy AirPods over the Raycon alternatives not for quality but because of a strong affinity they feel towards Apple's products. This brand love was not an accident; instead, it's something Apple has invested in diligently for decades.

As we discussed earlier, the death knell for a professional is to be interchangeable. You want to stand out in the mind of hiring managers as someone who can help them solve X. Getting clear on your MVC helps, but it's not enough for *you* to know it—potential employers must be able to quickly understand your value as well.

That's where professional positioning comes in, because as a professional in today's competitive market, **you are your product**.

The Goal

In this chapter we'll learn the basics of positioning and how you can apply those principles to your job search. The great part is you've done much of the hard work already. You understand your Core Four and how your unique experiences and interests have led to your Most Valuable Contribution. Now all we have to do is package it up nice and pretty so employers quickly and clearly understand how you can help them.

What Is Positioning?

Positioning refers to the place that a brand occupies in the minds of the customers and how it is distinguished from the products of the competitors.—[Wikipedia](#)

Now let's reimagine this geared at professionals who are looking for work:

Positioning refers to the place that a **professional** occupies in the minds of an **employer** and how they are distinguished from the **offerings** of their **competition**.

Your Product (That's You!)

In product marketing there is a concept called the 4Ps (also known as the "[marketing mix](#)"), which companies use to define their positioning for a specific product or service.

- Product: Refers to an item that satisfies the consumer's needs or wants
- Promotion: Refers to marketing communications
- Place: Refers to providing customer access
- Price: Refers to the amount a customer pays for a product

In professional positioning we'll borrow the first two Ps, then sprinkle in a bit of our own special sauce so you can stand out in a sea of competitors.

Your Professional Positioning Statement

Nailing this will make it easier to quickly communicate your value during interviews, at networking events, and social functions. In the startup world we call this an "elevator pitch," meaning it should be short enough that you can tell someone in an elevator what you do and they'll walk away with a solid sense of your value-add.

Your professional positioning statement should be a paragraph or less in written form and 30 seconds or less when spoken. It will summarize the value you can bring to an employer in a succinct way, including what you do, your areas of expertise, your strengths, and what you're looking for.

[Miles Shattuck](#), a self-proclaimed marketing nerd, shared a great formula for creating a professional positioning statement. There are entire books written on positioning, but I'd suggest running through Miles's step-by-step approach as a jumping-off point.

“ POSITIONING STATEMENT TEMPLATE #1

For this walk-through, we'll assume we're writing a positioning statement for a software developer, and then I'll include an example for a customer service supervisor. Let's fill in the following blanks with the software developer's information.

Sentence #1: I am a _____ with _____ years of experience in the _____ industry.

This is where you will communicate your professional identity, not necessarily your job title. For example, your job title might be Technical Specialist II, but you may decide software developer is more descriptive. For example, *I am a software developer with three years of experience in the technology industry.*

Sentence #2: I have expertise in _____.

The second sentence will provide your areas of expertise. List three major responsibilities or detailed skills for which you are considered an expert. For example, *I have expertise in mobile communications, app development, and QA testing.*

Sentence #3: My strengths include _____, _____, and _____.

This is where you list three of your strongest qualities that set you apart from other candidates. They could be specialized or particularly desirable skill sets, or some other skill/specialty that is part of your personal brand. You may also substitute a major accomplishment for the last strength. For example, my strengths include object-oriented programming languages, complexity reduction, and bug removal. Or if you add the accomplishment it would say, *my strengths include object-oriented programming languages and complexity reduction, and I was recently recognized for my outstanding compliance scores.*

Sentence #4: I'm looking for an opportunity to _____.

End with a reminder that you're looking for an opportunity like the one the recruiter is hiring for and reference the job description. Use vivid language to paint a picture of your brand values. Let's say the job description says:

- You have a passion for not just coding, but better software design at all levels

- You have experience or significant interest in web technologies

You might say, I'm looking for an opportunity to turn my knowledge and passion for web technologies into better software design that solves problems, exceeds expectations, and converts leads into loyal customers.

Put it all together, and bang! Here's our new positioning statement:

I am a software developer with three years of experience in the technology industry. I have expertise in mobile communications, app development, and QA testing. My strengths include object-oriented programming languages and complexity reduction, and I was recently recognized for my outstanding compliance scores. I'm looking for an opportunity to turn my passion for web technologies into better software design that solves problems, exceeds expectations, and converts leads into loyal customers.

POSITIONING STATEMENT TEMPLATE #2

I just learned about this template from [The Brand New You Show with Ryan Rhoten](#), episode 90, titled "Your Personal Brand Statement." I encourage you to listen to Ryan's podcast for more detail, but here are the basics:

Sentence #1: I am _____.

Similar to the above examples, this is where you state what you are known for, or what you want to be known for (podcast editor, copywriter, retail store manager, etc.).

Sentence #2: I help _____ understand/do _____ so that _____.

There are three spaces you will fill in to complete this positioning statement. First, you will clarify who it is that you help: those that benefit from your contribution. Second, you will state what your customers understand or do better as a result of your help. And finally, after "so that," you will say how your customers benefit from working with you.

You can read Miles's entire article on LinkedIn [here](#). As you test your statement on real people during your job search, you'll probably customize it to better align with your goals and style.

Your Promotional Materials

I'd highly recommend you create a Google Doc, or whatever your documentation tool of choice is (Notion, Dropbox Paper, Evernote, etc.) and use this as the point of truth that links out to each of your professional promotional materials.

This will not only speed up your application process (you won't have to rewrite basic answers over and over) but also helps ensure you're telling the same story across platforms.

The basics of your promotional materials will look like this:

- Resume
- Portfolio or professional website
- Your profile on professional networks
- Your references

One-Page Resume

After a dozen years of going through thousands of resumes, I am a strong believer in forcing your CV into one page at all cost.

If you're early in your career, or have large gaps in your resume, you may want to add projects or extracurricular activities to your resume. I personally love the idea of quoting a reference or two on the page, but you can also save this for your personal site.

If you have a decade or more of experience or have moved around a lot, focus on the last seven years, and perhaps your educational background *if* it's impressive. Yours truly dropped out of her senior year of college with a meh GPA in English literature. No hiring manager cares about my collegiate experiences. They care about the work I've done in the last decade, and how I can help them.

Luckily, there are amazing tools out there that can help you tell your story in resume-fashion.

Free tools

- [Wozber](#): Analyze a job description to tailor your materials to it, and then design and save
- [Standard Resume](#): Create a standardized, minimal resume to download or share online as a site
- [FlowCV](#): Design an attractive, modern resume, customizing all fonts and blocks

Premium tools (paid)

- [CakeResume](#): Build your website resume using drag-and-drop blocks to share and track online

After you've created your resume, ask someone you trust to review it or even offer a friendly face at a cafe a free drink if they'll give you their impression of your background from a cold read of your resume. Hiring managers are similar to strangers; they have no idea who you are and are instead looking for a reason to quickly pass over you or put you into the next-steps pile.

Optimize your resume

- [Resume Worded](#): Suite of AI tools to review your résumé and LinkedIn profile, spotting optimizations
- [Rolespark](#): Get your résumé peer-reviewed by a real person for free

Professional Website or Portfolio

Did you know that fewer than 7% of professionals have their own site? This simple step alone will make you stand out from the crowd (plus it's a great thing to have pop up when employers inevitably search for your name during the interview process).

Not a designer? No problem. No-code products have made it easy to create a personal site or profile from scratch that still looks great. I built <https://marenkate.com/> on WordPress with a premium theme and it only costs me a few bucks a year in hosting.

Step 1: Buy Your Domain

If your name isn't taken, grab it. If it is, think of creative ways to work part of your name into a URL, like [www.workwith\[YOUR NAME\].com](http://www.workwith[YOUR NAME].com).

Step 2: Build Your Site

There is a plethora of website builders out there. Below are ones that I've found easy to use and are free or inexpensive to get a solid professional website up fast.

- [Persona](#): Easily develop your personal landing page from minimal yet impressive templates
- [Squarespace](#): Imagine and create completely customizable, deep, and extensive personal websites
- [Carrd](#): Choose from a selection of simple About Me template pages to share your bio and links
- [About.me](#) (\$79/yr): Create super-minimal info pages to describe yourself and link your accounts

Need a little design inspo? Check out <https://humans.fyi/>.

Your Professional Profile(s)

Depending on your profession and industry, you will want to create (or optimize) profiles on a variety of professional networks like:

- [LinkedIn](#) (obviously)
- [Angellist](#) (aimed at startups)
- [Dribbble](#) or [Behance](#) (if you're a designer)

You can make those profiles your own by utilizing free design tools like [Canva](#) to customize banners with text, color, or images.

Beware of Your Online Footprint

Most hiring managers will Google a candidate at some point during the interview process. So do yourself a favor, open up a private browsing session, and stalk yourself.

What are the top five results? Most likely it's social media. Unless you're set to private, potential employers can (and will) poke around. Some tools to help you spring-clean your social media presence ...

- [Social Book Post Manager](#): Delete old Facebook likes or posts en masse
- [Will My Tweets Get Me Fired](#): Scan all of your public tweets and be alerted to red flags
- [Deseat.me](#): Find old social accounts online tied to your email, so you can delete them

Your References

Savvy employers care far more about results (that is, what you've actually done) than they do about optics (like where you went to school, or the brand name of the companies you've worked for).

A great way to “show” versus “tell” is by requesting references from people you've worked with *before* the offer stage.

Ideally, you can have 3–7 quotes from supervisors, peers, and subordinates, depending on your career stage and the roles you've held in the past. In an interview with [Evan Walden](#), CEO at [Getro](#), we talked about the concept of “frontloading” your references and how to leverage them in resumes, outreach emails, your personal site, and more:

“ The best way to [get the role] is to frame your background as pieces of evidence. Evidence that shows you can solve the problem that the company is facing.

A company hires a new person when they have a set of problems that can't be solved by the current team.

Thus, understanding what those problems are, and how to present your background through quantitative data of things that you've done [referrals/metrics]—that creates evidence [in the mind of the hiring manager] that you can solve their problem.

You can listen to the full interview [here](#). Evan shared lots of little-known tactics that he has seen the best candidates use over the years to stand out during the interview process, and he should know. Evan currently runs a company dedicated to helping Venture Capital firms connect their portfolio companies with top talent.

How to Ask for References

The stellar career advice site, The Muse, created a template for requesting references that makes the process foolproof. You can read the full article [here](#).

Hi [name],

I hope all is well! How have things been with you and [the person's company, organization, or personal interest]?

I'm reaching out because I've been interviewing for a [position name] role at [company], and I'd love to list your name as a reference, if you're willing. I thought of you because we've [ways in which you've worked together], and you could speak to my [key skills and abilities needed in the new position].

I've attached my current resume and the position description for your reference. I know the hiring team is particularly looking for someone who [very short description of key elements of the role], so specifically, I'm hoping you can talk about:

- [1-2 skills, abilities, or talents that are key to the position]
- [Specific project you worked on that's relevant to the role]
- [Key differentiator between you and other candidates]

Please let me know if you'd be willing to serve as a reference and, if so, your preferred contact info and any other details you need from my end. I believe the [call, email] will come from [hiring manager or recruiter's name] at [company] around [time frame].

And, of course, if you're busy or not comfortable, I completely understand. Thank you in advance for your time and let me know how I can return the favor!

All the best,

[Your name]

They also point out that it's important to be authentic in the process. If someone doesn't feel comfortable being a reference, or doesn't respond after two tries, let it go. Alternatively, when someone does serve as a reference be sure to follow up with a sincere thank you. I always recommend sending a physical card, especially in our world of digital-first. This small gesture will mean a lot and keep you in mind for future opportunities.

Key Takeaway

Professional positioning is a major part of standing out in the minds of potential employers and making it easier to land meaningful work that aligns with your drivers and MVC. Don't underestimate the importance of consistent branding and presentation across all professional channels. Also, having your positioning statement and promotional materials at hand will make the process go faster once you start it and save you from having to "reinvent the wheel" each time you apply for a role.

Next up ... We will go through the proven process that will get you in front of hiring managers and help you land a job you'll love.

Extended Resources & Reading

- [Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind](#) by Al Ries and Jack Trout (book)
- [Product Positioning](#) (post)

Chapter 6: The Proven Process

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.—Abraham Lincoln

At this point, the preparation you've put into your search during the Discovery portion of this book has already set you apart from 80% of your competition. Mr. Lincoln would be proud.

The next part will appear deceptively simple, but after a dozen-plus years of being on both sides of the table, I can count on one hand the number of people I've interviewed who have approached their job search using the *proven process* outlined in this chapter.

Don't give in to the temptation to jump into the search process all willy-nilly after the discovery and preparation you've done! **You will be setting yourself up to fail.** At best, you'll get lucky and a friend-of-a-friend will introduce you to what becomes your next job.

But you'll have missed the benefit of multiple offers and, most importantly, you won't be adding a critical skill to your career toolbox—the Get a Great Job (GGJ) process.

The Goal

The proven process we'll go through in this chapter boils down to creating a plan, carving out time to work the process, then building in deadlines and accountability to keep you motivated even if the going gets hard. It's a disciplined approach to running your job search that creates results and helps navigate the pitfalls of the application process.

If you learn this process and work it each time you want a new job (whether it's a new role within the same company or a career shift), I personally guarantee that you will be positioned well ahead of your competition and the sky will be your limit.

The “Get a Great Job” (GGJ) Process

Step 1: Create an “I Applied” Tracking System (IATS)

Based on all the discovery you did earlier, you probably have a good idea of what types of roles and which specific companies (or fields) you are interested in going after.

I like to suggest creating an A-List, B-List, and C-List of opportunities with the corresponding companies. As you begin the process, start with the roles you are least interested in because it will give you a chance to get your sea legs when it comes to navigating the application process. This is ESPECIALLY important if you are early in your career or are jumping back into the workforce after some time off.

I call this hit list the “I Applied” Tracking System (IATS) because it will serve as your point of truth for how many roles you’ve applied to and where you are in each process. Rarely will hiring managers keep great track of this themselves, so by staying organized and following up you’ll stand out from your competition and increase your chances of moving forward.

Take action!

- Make a copy of the [IATS— “I Applied” Tracking System](#)—and use it to keep track of every company you’re interested in and each job for which you’ve applied or had an interview. You can make a copy of our Google Sheet or create your own using Microsoft Excel or Airtable.

Step 2: Daily, Dedicated Time

When you’re looking for a new role, your *job* is getting a job.

It’s time to treat it like one.

This is made more complicated if you’re already employed, or busy with other responsibilities, but who said life was supposed to be easy?

It's essential that you set aside regular time (ideally each day, but at minimum a few times a week) to work the process. It's also beneficial to set a specific location (think of it like your "office") for your dedicated GGJ time.

Examples

- 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at Cafe Centro in South Park
- Noon to 12:45 p.m. each weekday between classes at the university library
- 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday in my home office after the kids go to bed, Saturday 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. before they wake up

Do not skip this part! Most people will work their job search when they *feel like it* or when *inspiration hits*, and this is one reason why most people don't thrive in their careers.

Add this to your calendar, tell your significant other, create accountability, and get excited. This is YOUR time and it's one of the best investments you can make in your career.

Step 3: Outbounds and Setting Specific Goals

Commit to a minimum number of "outbounds" per week. Then you can divide this number by how many dedicated time slots you've created in your week to understand how many outbounds you need to send each time your butt is in that seat (or perhaps you like the fancy standing desk, but you get the point).

What Is an "Outbound"?

In today's over-saturated market, the idea that "if you build it, they will come" has been pretty much debunked (unless it's a Starbucks in a small town off a highway, then they'll 100% come if you build it). Hence, the need for outbound effort, a term that originated in the sales world to help reps meet quotas and keep track of their leads.

For our purposes, we'll count an outbound as a specific communication aimed at helping you get a job—for example:

- Filling out an application
- Showing “interest” in a role on AngelList and adding a personalized note
- Reaching out to a loose connection to schedule a coffee or call
- Following up with a former boss to see if they may know of opportunities that you would be a good fit for

An outbound is submitting an **application**, **sending an email**, or **networking** which leads to an opportunity like an introduction, referral, or formal interview.

How Many Outbounds Should You Do?

In 2019, before the global job market imploded (thanks to COVID-19), depending on your skill set, seniority, and other factors, it’s suggested that you would send in [100–200 applications](#) per accepted job offer.

Now, I realize this sounds like a lot, and it is. But let’s remember that most people won’t have the clarity of Career Drivers and a deep understanding of their Core Four like you do, nor will they have positioned themselves in a way to stand out to hiring managers.

Lastly, very few people will follow a process like you’re learning here.

Let’s *hope* it takes you far less, but let’s prepare for the worst—just in case.

Step 4: Get Accountable

Exercise gurus suggest getting a workout buddy if you want to turn flab into abs. We’re going to borrow from the fitness world and use that same idea to keep you on track and accountable, especially if the going gets rough.

Ideally, you want to set up a weekly call, FaceTime, or in real life (IRL) check-ins with your accountability partner. This person could be a spouse, significant other, mentor, previous colleague, good friend, or family member. Whomever you choose must embody these four traits:

1. Good judgment

2. Not afraid to challenge you or call you on BS
3. Reliable (stick to your regular check-in schedule)
4. Honest

Sharing your progress tracker and “reporting” to your accountability partner each week will keep you on track and help keep you motivated.

Sample ask to an Accountability Partner

Hi _____,

I've always thought that you do such a great job being intentional with both your personal and professional goals. Do you have someone who helps you with that? I'm trying to get better at holding myself accountable (plus meeting goals) and would love to have an accountability partner like you!

Would you have time to dedicate to an accountability partnership with me where we could help each other?

Kind regards,
[Your name]

Step 5: Set Deadlines

Sometimes this deadline is naturally occurring: “I have to start bringing in income by XX date so we don’t lose the house.” If you’re currently employed or have a bit more flexibility in your search, it may be helpful to manufacture a deadline to keep the process running.

If I hadn't set an aggressive deadline for this book to be published (even with my daily writing time scheduled and a minimum word count committed to each day), it would be easy for six months to turn into 12 and for those to slip into years. I most certainly would have toiled endlessly trying to make each sentence "perfect" versus "good enough."

Create a deadline for when you want to sign an offer letter or start your next project.

Then do all in your power to get there. It doesn't mean if you get two offers that don't feel right, you have to take them.

Instead, you'll have learned a lot about what you're looking for from the interviews that led to offers, and you'll have gained some confidence in the process. Take what you've learned and then create a new deadline so you keep moving closer to landing your dream job.

Step 6: Treat Yo'self With Rewards

These don't need to be grandiose. It could be as simple as splurging on your favorite refreshing beverage after you finish your outbound quota for the day or doing a special dinner and movie night if you meet your weekly goal.

Small rewards help create a sense of achievement, which will build confidence (which you'll need in interviewing) and keep the momentum going.

Job Boards & Career Sites

Based on what type of work you're looking for, there are endless websites on which to find opportunities and that will help you hit your outbound goals. Below I've outlined the different types and some examples:

Aggregators

A job aggregator is essentially a search engine for open roles. They gather up postings from job boards and websites and compile them into a single searchable interface.

They offer tools to narrow your search, such as part-time vs. full-time, hourly vs. salary, start date, and location, along with other sorting options. Think of job aggregators like you think of Google, only for job opportunities. Examples of job aggregators include:

- [Indeed](#)
- [SimplyHired](#)
- [LinkedIn Jobs](#)
- [ZipRecruiter](#)
- [Careerjet](#)

Job Boards

Job boards are websites used by employers to directly advertise their job vacancies. They are an essential tool for job seekers and employers to connect on. Job boards can range from location-based or career-based to demographic-based (veterans, students), from free to premium, from highly specialized to general, and from category-based (startups, freelance, internship, nonprofit) to everything in between.

- [CrunchBase](#)
- [Behance](#)
- [Remote.co](#)
- [FlexJobs](#)

Career Pages

Career pages are pages on a company's website displaying open roles and opportunities to join or connect with the company. These are valuable when the values or ethos of a specific company speak to you. Generally, you'll be able to apply directly or be explicitly directed on how to apply. You may see a clear picture of what it's like to work at the organization, people on their

team, and the goals they are working towards.

- [Airbnb](#)
- [DataRobot](#)
- [TaskRabbit](#)

Key Takeaway

Don't forget that getting a great job is your job, while you're actively looking. Treat it like one, and you'll reap the rewards not only in your current search but for the rest of your career. Create a plan, carve out time to work the process, then build in deadlines and accountability to keep yourself motivated.

Being data-driven and organized through your IATS increases your follow-ups with hiring managers at companies you're excited about. It's something that so *few* applicants do and instantly will make you stand out. Plus, you can go back to your IATS year after year, deepening relationships and laying the groundwork for future opportunities.

Next up ... we'll dive into how you can nail the application process, the initial interview, and the art of the follow-up.

Extended Resources & Reading

- **The Ultimate Database:** If you purchased the [No Brainer or Pro Package](#) you already have access to the Ultimate Database of Job Boards and Remote Resources, which will help you supercharge your search!
- **Only purchased the e-book?** No worries—you can get access to the Ultimate Database (\$99 value) for a one-time charge of only \$49 [here](#).

Chapter 7: Nailing the Application Process + Initial Interview

The only way on earth to influence other people is to talk about what they want and show them how to get it.—Dale Carnegie

An Uncomfortable Truth

Hiring managers do not care about you.

Yep, you heard me.

Brutal right? But 'tis life.

This is one of the most important things to realize as you approach finding a new role, getting a raise, or almost anything to do with your career.

You care about you. You care about *your* family, and why *you* need this job, or a raise, but the hiring manager you're talking to, your boss, or a potential employer does not.

They don't care about you.

But you know what they do care about?

Themselves, and what *you* can do for *them*.

Counterintuitively, this is actually a great thing for you ...

Because *most* people cannot get out of the “me-first” mindset.

We see it every day at my company, [Avra Talent](#). The vast majority of applicants approach each application from a me-first mindset.

“This is why I want XYZ role.”

“This is why my skill set is great.”

“This is why I’m special.”

They were never told that hiring managers only want to understand how you can solve their particular problem or help them reach their goal.

Understanding this simple, brutal truth puts you in the top 5% of candidates. Because now you can frame your Core Four and Most Valuable Contribution (MVC) in a way that resonates with the employer’s unique problems and pain points.

The Goal

In this chapter we’ll cover what to expect during the application process and give you a look behind the curtain at how recruiting works at most companies.

What stands out?

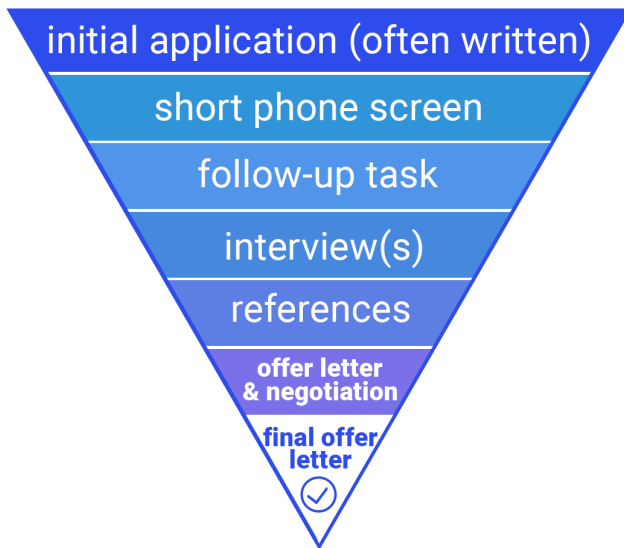
What is ignored?

How can you apply 80/20 thinking to your application?

We’ll dive into what motivates the person on the other side of the (virtual) table, highlight the pain points they’re looking to solve, then outline how you can nail the interview process by showing that you are their pain pill, not a vitamin.

The Recruiting Funnel

Whether they call it this or not, and whether it's properly managed (it's probably not), every open role will follow some version of a "Recruiting Funnel." This is the process that a company follows internally after a candidate submits an initial application or shows interest through a specific action.



The most common components of a Recruiting Funnel are:

- Initial application (often written)
- Short phone screen
- Test task, or follow-up ask
- Longer phone screen or video interview
- Test project
- Half- or full-day interview (panel interview)
- Reference and/or background check
- Offer letter
- Negotiation
- Final offer letter

There are whole books written on the later stages of the interview process, but in reality, most candidates fall off during the initial application and first phone screen. This is the gatekeeper area, and what we'll prepare you to ace so you have the best chance of moving on to the later stages.

The Initial Application

Normally this will be the shortest part of the interview process. It's also the part where it's the easiest to get lost in the shuffle. Savvy recruiters will create questions that are tailored to the actual outcomes of the job you'd be hired for so they can quickly bubble up who is a fit and who is not (without having to weed through resumes).

But, don't count on that. Instead we'll go through how to take fate into your own hands by succinctly showing hiring managers why *you* deserve to be moved on to the next phase.

“ One of the biggest challenges we've come across when speaking with a potential hire is not being able to quickly understand what they're good at, what they're looking for and how they would fit in at our company.—[David C. Baker](#), author of [The Business of Expertise](#)

Focus on Getting to the First Interview

[Megan Berry](#), VP of Product at [Octane AI](#), has been involved in hiring dozens of professionals across a variety of fully remote and co-located teams. When I spoke to Megan, I thought her advice was golden:

“ Your main focus should be getting to the first interview. So often I see people who put almost no effort into the application process and then are surprised that they aren't moving to the phone screen stage.

There are two ways I've seen candidates greatly improve their chances of getting to the second stage:

- 1) Whether it's in a cover letter, "add a note" section (like AngelList has) OR in the application process (many remote companies will set up a few filter questions like "what interests you in this specific role and X co") be sure to express why YOU are the person for THIS role.
- 2) If possible, find a warm introduction. We almost always at least have a conversation with someone who has been introduced through a mutual connection.

We'll dive deeper into the idea of warm introductions in Chapter 8. The great part is that (even if you have a relatively small professional network) we live in an increasingly interconnected world. You are probably only a few degrees away from someone at the company you're applying for, more often than you realize.

Megan also mentioned that for remote roles it's important to:

“...lead with remote experience if you have any. If not, lead with WHAT energizes you about working in an autonomous environment and why you will thrive by referencing specific examples from the past.

Make Sure Your Writing Is On Point

Be sure to use a tool like Grammarly to check the basics, but also use common sense to craft concise messages that give the reader (recruiter or hiring manager) a sense of who you are, and how you can help *them* solve their problems or reach *their* goals. Job descriptions, career pages, and a brand's website should give you more than enough information to craft your narrative in a way that will appeal to them specifically and cover the pertinent questions.

I'm a big believer in examples, both positive and negative. So below are some real-life responses to application questions that I've seen over the years with comments on what works and what doesn't.

- **Application Question:** What do you want to get out of this position?

- **Candidate Answer:** I believe that this position will grow my market research knowledge, promotion and branding skills, and communication skills, which will be helpful for me in my further career.

<< The “me-first” approach mixed with a robotic tone makes this a dud of a response.

- **Application Question:** What has been your most memorable experience within product development?
- **Candidate Answer:** I wouldn’t say there is a particular moment that stands out as the most memorable to me.

<< Just blah ... this lack of passion IMMEDIATELY turns the hiring manager off and makes the application easy to pass over.

Alternatively, here are some thoughtful responses that have moved candidates on to the next step.

- **Application Question:** What honestly draws you to this role at (a company)?
- **Candidate Answer:** I’ve been in the storage industry since 2004 when I took a job at _____. The one thing that has remained a constant for me and kept me working in storage is that at its core, the job is about helping people and I find that really satisfying. The CSA role really excites me because it would give me an opportunity to combine my passion and experience helping people with my passion for music. (Company) is exactly the kind of company I wish had been around when I was younger and trying to figure out how to release records. I’d love the opportunity to help provide artists with the support I was looking for.

<< I love the sense of storytelling in this answer. The reader immediately joins them on their journey and quickly understands the context that shows why the applicant could solve their problem.

- **Application Question:** Describe any experience you have relative to this customer success position:
- **Candidate Answer:** I’m answering emails and phone calls all day in my current position. I am constantly having to walk clients through problems and listen to their concerns. I enjoy interacting with people and helping them work through these problems on a daily basis.

- **Application Question:** Do you have experience scheduling across multiple time zones?
- **Candidate Answer:** Yes! The main task that I do for my clients is scheduling. I have a lot of schedule-heavy clients. At one time, I had clients across all US time zones. It was pretty cool!

Stand Out Through Video

Very few applicants take advantage of the power of video when applying for a role. [Loom](#) makes it easy to stand out by sending a quick 30–60 second video in addition to your written application or resume submission.

You can add the link in your application or send it separately in your follow-up email to the hiring manager (try both and really knock their socks off!).

I've seen videos that answer application questions as well as pitch the recruiter on why that person loves what the company is doing and why they'd be a great fit. This not only shows initiative but highlights the applicant's passion and a level of technical competency that employers are looking for in fully remote hires.

Stop Reinventing the Wheel

Brands often have a “How We Talk About [Company Name]” document that outlines their high-level pitch and talking points, and gives detailed explanations of advantages and selling points. In between businesses when I've pitched myself for consulting gigs, I always create a document like this, but for myself.

Create your own “Application Answers” document and populate it with the answers to general application questions. As you apply to jobs, add recurring questions you come across along with your answers.

This will save you time and energy on the application process. Time you can use to customize and personalize specific parts of each response based on the role and company. It's a simple hack that can save dozens of hours over a single job search and increase your chances of landing a follow-up interview.

The Follow-Up

Over the years, interacting with thousands upon thousands of candidates, I can count a dozen or so times where a candidate has followed up directly with me after applying for a role I'm involved with.

This simple tactic is GOLD, especially since so few candidates do it.

Step 1: Apply First

Don't skip the actual application step and go directly to the hiring manager, founder, or C-level contact you find on LinkedIn. It makes you look like you can't follow instructions or think that their process doesn't apply to you.

Respect the process and the team's time.

Step 2: Track Your Application in Your IATS

This helps you keep a record of when you applied, where, and who you followed up with/need to follow up with.

Step 3: The Second Touch

Using LinkedIn, or a company's team page on their website, figure out who the role is most likely reporting to. For smaller companies you can usually find out who is recruiting for the position (e.g., the Head of HR, a Senior Recruiter in X Division) and message them directly—but over the years I have found it more productive when a candidate reaches out to the person they'd be working with.

Below are three real examples of follow-ups that got candidates to the next step (names and companies have been anonymized).

EXAMPLE #1

As we move into the next phase of the interview process, if you are interested, I would be happy to share some other video ideas to help connect a virtual organization. I had some wonderful successes working across remote teams in the past with [REDACTED]

Meanwhile, I am very excited about our meeting tomorrow (Tuesday, June 2nd). I am eager to learn more about you, your organization, and how this new role can help everyone accomplish \$1 Billion helping clients achieve better results than even they thought possible.

Talk to you soon.

EXAMPLE #2

An ad/pr agency was hiring for a director-level position. A lot of interest and candidates ensued. I interviewed one guy who told me that even if he was not chosen by the CEO, he was willing to work for three months without pay to prove his value to the company. I passed this info to the CEO who ended up hiring another candidate for the position but was so impressed with the offer that he agreed to my interviewee working under him for 3 months. At the end of the 3-month period—guess what.... This guy was hired into another role by the CEO.”—Susan, (Interviewer)

EXAMPLE #3

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Mon, Feb 10, 2020 at 11:43 AM

Subject: Next steps

To: Maren Kate <mk@inde.co>

Hey Maren,

Hope you had a great weekend! Really good to catch up on Friday.

In terms of next steps, if you'd like me to speak to anyone in your team, this Thursday would be a particularly good day for me.

I'll reach out to references and get details over to you.

What other information would you need from me?

Below are some more thoughts and things I've worked on over the weekend.

Inde prototype

I think approaching the candidate supply side first and focusing on creating value in the early community/rapid growth makes sense. Particularly from a VC perspective.

The challenge being: *how can we own the entire remote professional network as quickly as possible?*

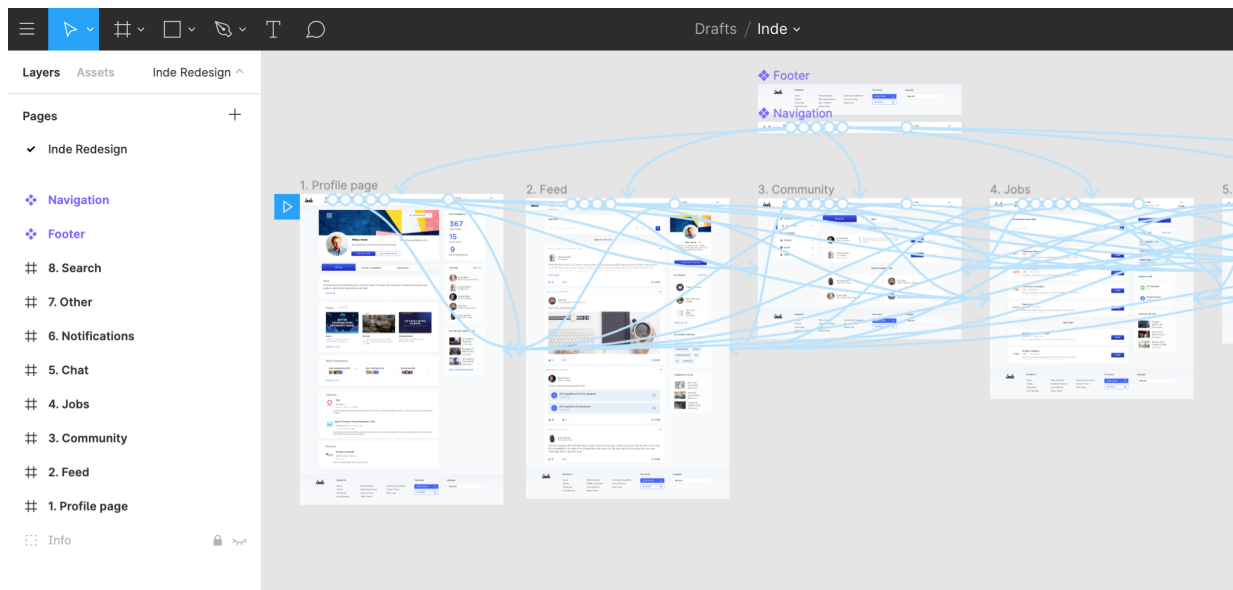
I've started prototyping the whole platform (screenshot attached). This will help us to crystallize what the early value for the community will be.

As we're discussing things, I can flesh that out in an actual clickable prototype that will also be useful for conversations with investors.

This might be a good starting point for a small project we could play with together. What do you think?

As we get closer to nailing down the product vision in the near/long term, it will then be easier to start turning that into a proper roadmap.

This may also impact whether we hire devs earlier on. So, we may want to think about that. I know quite a few people who would be good.



(Prototype brainstorm of the Inde platform)

Below are some tools that will make it easier to follow up with hiring managers. Many job seekers use LinkedIn Premium or InMail, which is fine, but a bit of an echo-chamber and very pricey.

- [Hunter](#): Find someone's email simply by providing their company domain address
- [Boomerang](#): Schedule emails to be sent and be reminded to follow up to nonresponses
- [Reply](#): Locate email addresses while browsing LinkedIn via a Chrome extension

The Initial Phone or Video Conversation

This initial screen will often be with a recruiter or someone on the company's talent team. The goal of this initial screen is to make sure you're not full of it, don't show up late, or come across as a total weirdo. You've got this, but a few things to remember:

Be. On. Time.

This cannot be stressed enough. Get into a quiet place, with good reception and/or internet connectivity and be ready five minutes beforehand.

Timeliness and preparedness are one of the major things I look for in an initial screen and an easy way to shine.

You'd be blown away by how many people will take these calls on a busy street corner or show up late.

Google Them

Be sure you have researched not only the company and the role but also *the person interviewing you*. This should take no more than five minutes but will allow you to build up instant rapport and get a better sense of who you're talking to.

Have Your Talking Points Ready

[Mike Del Ponte](#), Venture Partner at Falcon Ventures, walked me through one way that candidates can structure their portion of the initial phone screen or longer interview. It's based on another set of 4Ps from the marketing world but is a great guiding light as you think through how to sell yourself during the interview process:

- Promise: "I can help with X so you/your company can achieve Y"
- Picture: Paint a picture of what it looks like when you're on board, use "we," and mentally walk them through the bright future with you solving their problems in said role
- Proof: Tell stories and give examples of times you have solved problems and gotten results, and follow up with references
- Pitch: This is the ask portion; it could be as simple as "So what are the next steps in the application process?" and following up by email to get the second call or sending over a proposal if you're looking for a contract

Use this formula and then practice with friends and family, reviewing your personal pitch and bullet points beforehand. You don't want to sound like you're reading off a script, but you also don't want to ramble.

On Video Calls

Especially for remote roles, the person you are speaking to if you do a video interview will be looking at your home office. How do you have it set up? Is it quiet? How is your internet speed? Remember these things if the first screen is a video call and prepare. Dress like you would if you were going into an interview at an office.

Craft Your Questions

Any good interviewer will leave a few minutes at the end of the call to open the floor for your questions about the role or company. Be sure to do your research and prepare 2–3 meaningful questions—this goes far.

Practice Interviewing

Ask friends, acquaintances, acquaintances of friends—particularly people who have/are doing the job you want, or work at a similar place, or have a lot of experience interviewing. You can use sites like [Clarity](#) if you can't find a few people within your network.

Another great trick is to record yourself answering questions and then play it back to see where you can improve. The best public speakers watch hours of themselves talking and then use that knowledge to become best in class.

Follow Up!

Wait, I just read this section a few pages ago ...

I know. It's so important I'm reiterating the point.

After you've completed the first screen, whether it was by phone or video chat, email the person you were talking to (their email should be in the calendar invite) and thank them for their time.

Get a bonus point if you can authentically compliment them, or the company, on something that you learned from the call, or if you can send over something of interest/relevance to the role/company.

Finish by telling them you look forward to the next steps and that if there is anything else you can provide, to let you know.

EXAMPLE #1

Hi [REDACTED],

I hope you had a great weekend!

I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation last week regarding the position at [REDACTED].

If there are any questions I can answer, I'd be happy to make myself available at your convenience!

Thanks so much,

[REDACTED]

EXAMPLE #2

Hi [REDACTED]!

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about the Executive Assistant to the CEO of [REDACTED] opportunity. I enjoyed our conversation and the additional information you shared about the expectations for this position.

I am excited about this position because it is not narrowly defined and can be shaped by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] needs as well as my unique set of skills. I am also attracted to [REDACTED] supportive work culture—teamwork, work-life balance and staff involvement in strategic decisions. It would be wonderful if I am invited to move forward in the interview process.

Thank you once again for speaking with me today.

Best regards,



So simple, yet so impactful since less than 5% of candidates do this.

Key Takeaway

Once you get through the initial application and phone screen stages you will move onto deeper dives, across one or multiple teams. This can be anything from a test project, to a full panel interview, to several one-on-one calls or virtual whiteboard sessions. Much of this process will depend on the industry, seniority of the role, and stage in the company's lifecycle.

Remember that as you progress through the hiring process, many of the people you are speaking to are interviewing in **addition** to their “day job.” Everyone is stretched thin.

In each interaction, aim to be enjoyable to engage with, focus on how the other person will feel when they walk away from this interaction, and look for ways to authentically build trust and rapport. These simple guideposts will put you head and shoulders above your competition, most of whom are only thinking of how *they* come across.

Next up ... In the final chapter we'll supercharge your search by tapping into your existing networks and leveraging others' connections to find warm introductions.

Chapter 8: Working Your Network (Even If It's Not Yours)

As a kid my family moved around a fair bit, so it wasn't until my teenage years when we settled in Las Vegas that I was able to put down some roots in the "friend" department.

After high school, me and a bunch of other grads around the turn of the century were awarded a tobacco-settlement scholarship (very Nevada) that we could use at one of two state universities. I chose Reno, because it was as far as I could get from Vegas while still being in the state.

By my senior year, though, I had dropped out. My first business was growing, and I made a bet that I could do better financially by bartending at nights and running my business during the day than from whatever job opportunities graduating with my English literature degree may have unlocked.

Needless to say, I never really tapped into my collegiate network.

But I had heard throughout the years that "it's not what you know, but who you know"...

So, lacking fancy family business friends, money, or university connections, I lucked into my first real professional network through blogging and a nascent platform called Twitter.

Timing is everything and at that point the internet was not nearly as crowded with content as it is today. So through my janky little blog (<http://escapingthe9to5.com/>) and Twitter, I was able to meet lots of helpful entrepreneurs who were generous with their time and advice.

This stroke of luck led me to validate a business idea that would eventually go on to become [Zirtual](#), and was the impetus for my move from Reno to San Francisco. More luck ensued because I got to the Bay Area during a startup cycle where companies like Postmates, Airbnb, Uber, and Cloudflare were all in earlier stages and I was lucky to meet and learn from seriously talented entrepreneurs and investors.

I had stumbled my way into an incredibly powerful network that still pays dividends today.

The Goal

Building and nurturing your network is one of the single most important things you can do for your career. Over 50% of new hires come through referrals, although the percentage of employees who refer others is less than 7%.

In this final chapter we'll talk about how to leverage your network (and your network's network) to increase the number of opportunities you see and speed up the time it takes to land a great role.

First, What Is a Network?

I could fumble my way through an explanation but instead, I'll hand the mic to [Wikipedia](#):

A personal network is a set of human contacts known to an individual, with whom that individual would expect to [interact](#) at intervals to support a given set of activities. In other words, a personal network is a group of caring, dedicated people who are committed to maintain a relationship with a person in order to support a given set of activities. Having a strong personal network requires being connected to a network of resources for mutual development and growth.

Personal networks can be understood by:

- who knows you
- what you know about them
- what they know about you
- what are you learning together
- how you work at that

Personal networks are intended to be mutually beneficial, extending the concept of teamwork beyond the immediate [peer group](#).

The term is usually encountered in the [workplace](#), though it could apply equally to other pursuits outside work.

Thanks, Wikipedia, that was, if not tantalizing, definitely informative. Keep doing your thang.

Types of Networks

Depending on your background, there will usually be one or two main networks that will give you the most leverage during your job search and will make sense to nurture throughout your lifetime. Choosing which networks these are depends on your Career Drivers, industry, and where you can create meaningful connections.

Educational

If you are wicked smart or wicked privileged, you may get into a university that puts a lot of time and effort into their alumni network. These are goldmines for those who are lucky enough to be involved in them. But educational networks are not limited to Ivy League schools; instead, they could range from a close group of friends from high school who keep in touch, to the incredibly active Indiana University alumni network, to a [Lambda School](#) cohort.

Professional

This is who you've worked with in the past. Though I've mostly been a founder (or a mediocre bartender) my whole career, I have met some amazing colleagues through consulting and interim-COO stints I did between startups. Professional networks can also include:

- **Vendors you've worked with** in the past ([Kruze Consulting](#), in my case)
- **Groups you've been involved with** ([Founder Institute](#), which is what originally brought me to San Francisco, and most recently [On Deck Fellowship](#))
- **Meetups you've attended** (in-person & virtual) and contacts you've made through these events

- **Conferences** (in-person & virtual) you've attended and contacts you have made through these events

Personal

Friends, family, neighbors, exes you are on good terms with (seriously). Your personal network is often your strongest. Depending on your career goals and life circumstances, your personal network may not produce a direct introduction to your next job but is often good at helping you connect through “loose ties.”

Example: Your mom's best friend may be retired with a passion for HGTV, but her daughter-in-law could be an early employee at that hypergrowth AI company you're interested in and be willing to do a coffee to please the MIL, which turns into a few introductions, which lead to an interview.

Virtual

Any network that exists primarily on the information highway is virtual. LinkedIn, AngelList, Twitter are all obvious ones—but more niche virtual networks often produce closer ties. Perhaps you're a gamer and have connected with people through Twitch. Those people probably have jobs and, because of your shared interests, are more likely to help out if asked. Other examples of virtual networks would be:

- [All Raise](#)
- [Snapchat/TikTok](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [WeChat](#)
- [Pinterest](#)
- [Yolo](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [Reddit](#)

Why Weak Ties Are Stronger

The idea of weak ties or “loose connections” has been spotlighted a lot in recent years when it comes to networking, selling, or finding a new role.

In social networks, you have different links—or ties—to other people. Strong ties are characterized as deep affinity; for example, family, friends, or colleagues. Weak ties, in contrast, might be acquaintances, or a stranger with a common cultural background. The point is that the strength of these ties can substantially affect interactions, outcomes and well-being.—“[Weak Ties Matter](#),” April 2016

It makes sense that weak ties are valuable when it comes to things like landing a new job. Those you already have a strong tie with are usually within the same social or professional circles as you, accessing the same information as you do, whereas acquaintances, friends of friends, or the person sitting next to you at the bar are usually privy to information you aren’t.

A great book on the topic, [Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success](#), by [Adam Grant](#) discusses a study that showed that 17% of people heard about a new job from a strong tie, whereas 28% heard about opportunities from a weak tie. Acquaintances will always know about more opportunities and be connected to a more diverse crowd than your strong ties will.

Authenticity Rules

Whether you’re tapping into an existing network or trying to build one from scratch (we’ll touch on that shortly), two things to remember when it comes to your network are:

- Be authentic
- Be in it for the long run

Today’s culture is full of Instagram filters, reality TV, and business books lauding “fake it till you make it.” It’s exhausting. Ignore all that horse hockey. It’s time to drop the image you’re trying to project and instead tap into your authentic self as you approach building a network.

That self may be insecure, it may be fearful about the future, it may be a bit brash or super-goofy—but it's who you are.

Obviously, there are parts of each of our personalities we try to reform or dilute a bit (yours truly is a loud talker, especially with a drink or two in her), but besides true character flaws, try to embrace your authentic self as you connect with others.

On a different note, we have all met people that always want something and never seem to give back. No one likes those people; they're annoying at best, slimy at worst.

Giving back doesn't have to mean you give back directly; instead, it's more of a way of life. When you're early in your career or making a pivot, you may need to ask a lot more than you give. But down the line you can pay it forward.

When someone does you a solid (shares their knowledge, gives you time, introduces you to someone they know), be sure to make a note of it. Literally, keep a Google spreadsheet or use a personal customer relationship management (CRM) like [Monica](#) or [Airtable](#).

Be sure to follow up with a thank-you text, call, or even better, a card—so few people write notes anymore that it leaves a 10x impression when you do. Then check in with them over time, and see how you can be helpful to them, or to anyone in their network.

Leveraging Social Media

As you actively look for your next role, don't forget to use social media to your advantage. You should have already positioned yourself in a consistent, professional way across any active social media accounts you maintain. Now it's time to leverage them to tap weak ties, get warm introductions, and find out about opportunities.

Cut. Paste. Customize

Facebook, LinkedIn

- [Personalize], I'm looking for my next opportunity and am particularly interested in X or Y Co. - if you're connected to someone who works there, I'd love an introduction, trying to get a better sense of the roles and culture.

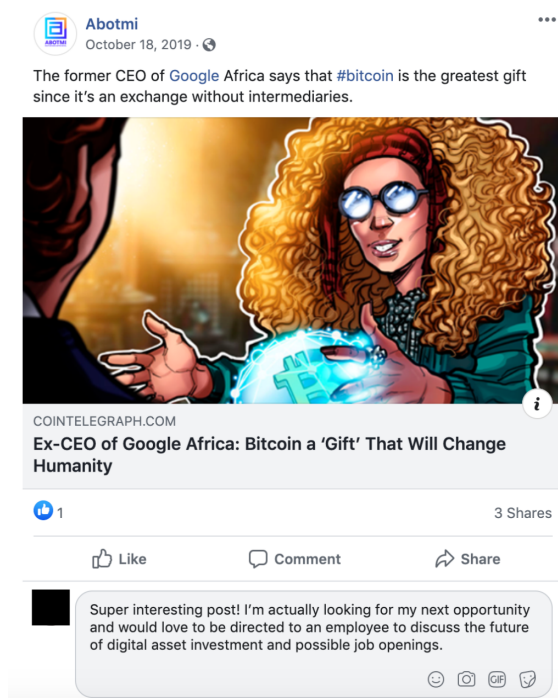
LinkedIn, Twitter

- I just applied for X Role at @YCompany (tag that company's handle) - excited about their [personalize why you're excited] and would love to connect with anyone who used to work there or currently does.

Any Social Network

- Reply to posts from the company, show interest in the role and say you're looking to connect w/ someone who works there to learn more about their culture and X department.

Examples That Have Led to Interviews



TODAY

10:13 am

I follow your work on various social media platforms and love so many of your posts. Your work is inspiring and it has encouraged me to reach out.

I am looking for my next opportunity and would love to speak to you about possible open positions within your company. I would also be honored for any feedback you'd be willing to give on some of my original digital media.

Feel free to reach out at any point. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

11:26 ↵



House of Blues Las Vegas ✓

@HOBLasVegas



Hi there! My name is [REDACTED] and I'm currently searching for my next opportunity. I am a huge fan of House of Blues and have been to multiple across the country. I'm interested in speaking with anyone I can regarding workplace culture and possible opportunities. Feel free to refer me in any direction. I look forward to hearing from you! [REDACTED]

11:26 AM ✓

No Network? No Problem

Unless you are reading this from a self-contained bunker in the middle of nowhere and drones deliver your food and water, you're interacting with people at least some of the time.

So, you actually *do* have a network, even if it's small.

That being said, there are some surefire ways to grow that network or tap into the right niche if you're early on in your career or rejoining the workforce.

Find Your Tribe

One morning, whilst visiting my grandmother in Gainesville, Florida, I had picked up a discarded *Wall Street Journal* in a local coffee shop. As a young entrepreneur trying to construct my own personal MBA, I loved reading the business section of the WSJ.

That particular day I read a story about the guy behind a startup accelerator called [Founder Institute](#), out in California. I'd never heard of a "startup accelerator" before, but the concept intrigued me as it sounded like a crash course in building a business.

The deadline for applications for the winter 2010 cohort was coming up, so I spent the rest of that week crafting what I thought was an excellent application.

A few days later, I got a generic rejection email.

I was crushed.

But then (and I still don't know what it was that gave me this burst of courage) I decided to write back and explain that I was exactly the kind of early-stage entrepreneur that their course was built for. Over a few impassioned paragraphs I re-pitched why they should give me a shot and hit "send."

The next day I got a response from the Founder Institute team that said I was “in.”

Because it was held in person in Palo Alto, California, I decided to move to the Bay Area for a few months during the course. That decision **radically altered the course of my life** and laid the foundation for what my network is today.

Your launchpad will most likely look different than mine. It may be an online course, an academic fellowship, or something like joining [Remote Year](#) or [WiFi Tribe](#).

It could also be something close by, like a meetup ([Meetup](#)) for stay-at-home mothers who are re-entering the workforce, or veterans rejoining civilian life and looking for roles in the tech industry (<https://vetsintech.co>).

The point is to find a group, or small community, who come from various paths in life yet are brought together by a shared mission. This is fertile ground for your early network to put down roots in.

6 Ways to Kickstart Your Network

1. Find people who currently work at companies you’re interested in and, in an authentic way, ask for a quick call or see if they can answer a few questions via email.
2. Follow people in your field (or your soon-to-be field) on social media, watch what they post, and interact with them when you can do so in a meaningful way. Never be afraid to ask questions of “experts” who put themselves out there; more often than not they will engage.
3. Join your college’s alumni club (especially if you are still in the same city).
4. Join specific professional or industry groups within your area and also those that are completely virtual.
5. Find blogs or podcasts in your desired field and begin to engage with the people who produce them, as well as the community that consumes the content—they’re likely to be great “weak ties.”

6. Listen to the podcast I did with [Nick Sonnenberg](#) of [Leverage](#). Nick is one of the best networked people I know, and in this interview he breaks down his method and how he built his network and what he would do if he was starting from scratch. It's a goldmine of ideas and tactics.

References Are Your Biggest Champions

We talked about prepping your references before you start your job search in Chapter 4. When you reconnect with your references, it's a great opportunity to ask them for introductions and input into your job search.

After you have your hit list, go through each of your references' LinkedIn or other professional networks to see if they're connected to anyone who works at the places you're applying to. Share your resume or professional profiles and ask for quick feedback; those who have already worked with you, like you, and are willing to be a reference will be happy to ping you when they hear of a great opportunity and provide warm introductions when you ask.

The key is to make it easy for them to do so.

Key Takeaway

We know an overlooked part of landing a great job is tapping into your existing network. This consists of friends, family, but most importantly "weak ties." Referrals are only 6.9% of applicants yet comprise 46% of all hires at top-performing companies, so don't forget to leverage the networks you have access to for warm introductions and access to opportunities that may not be publicly available.

Don't forget, humans like helping other humans. Authentically networking and asking for help can change the trajectory of your career.

Extended Resources & Reading

- [*Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life*](#) by Dr. Albert-László Barabási (full book)
- Author of *Give and Take* Adam Grant's [talk at Google](#)

Conclusion

As I sit in a cafe, about to submit this manuscript for its final proofread, my life is almost unrecognizable from the version of Maren who, half a decade ago, sat in a very different cafe wondering what to do with her life.

Material things have changed.

Shortly after my cafe experience, I was contacted via cold-email on AngelList by the founder of a co-living company. For almost a year, I got to travel the world while honing my operational chops and working with amazing people—some of whom are close friends to this day (shout out #OysterLife).

After that, I landed an interim COO role at [Calm.com](https://calm.com), when they were only 15 people. That experience gave me some much-needed professional confidence and planted the seed for my next company, [Avra Talent](https://avra.talent), a platform that helps fast-growing teams scale their remote recruiting operations, affordably and flexibly.

Avra continues to grow, and now runs 80% of the time without any input needed from me. It's led to insights and opportunities like writing this book and the creation of [Inde.co](https://inde.co).

But the most striking changes have been the ones that can't be quantified.

The quest to understand what really drove me—my Personal Core Values and what my Most Valuable Contribution (MVC) could be to the world—have radically changed who I am as a person.

I traded in fear for peace of mind.

The idea that life is a zero-sum game has melted away, and instead I am always on the lookout for problems my MVC can help others solve.

Most importantly, understanding my Career Drivers, Core Four, and Most Valuable Contribution has given me a compass that helps navigate life's ups and downs, both personally and professionally.

The Top 5%

If you have followed this step-by-step guide, you should start seeing similar changes in your career and life. You now possess the knowledge that will set you apart from 95% of professionals out there. Applied, this framework will help you:

- **Discover** what your Most Valuable Contribution (MVC) is and which companies or industries need it
- **Position** yourself to stand out from the crowd and show potential employers how you, and you alone, can solve their most pressing problems
- **Work** the proven process to get the interview, wow hiring managers, and land the job

No one can take that away from you and the great part is that this kind of self-reflection pays dividends over time, especially if you revisit it whenever you're at an inflection point.

Taking the time to discover and work the process to find and land meaningful work is one of the best investments you can make. It's an investment of your time and energy, the most precious assets you possess.

Now, Let's Go!

I'm excited to see what amazing jobs you will go on to do, but more importantly, how taking control of your career can positively impact your life and the lives of those around you. If you have questions or want to share your progress, please reach out to me @marenkate on [Twitter](#) (and pretty much everywhere else).

Never forget that you are completely unique and that no matter where you are, or what the world seems like at the moment, there are always opportunities for you to create a positive impact and do meaningful work.

Bibliography

- Barabási Albert-László. (2014). *Linked: how everything is connected to everything else and what it means for business, science, and everyday life*.
<https://www.amazon.com/Linked-Everything-Connected-Business-Everyday/dp/0465085733>.
- Cajiao, A., & Kate, M. (2020, August 21). *How to become remote-fluent with Andres Cajiao of Torre*. <https://blog.inde.co/remote-fluent-interview-andres-cajiao/>.
- Del Ponte, M. (2020). *Mike Del Ponte*.
<https://omny.fm/shows/inde-on-air/essentials-for-today-s-job-search-and-how-to-stay>.
- Dingel, J. I., & Neiman, B. (2020). (working paper). *How Many Jobs Can be Done at Home?*
Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26948>
- Douglas, R. (2020, September 1). "Accurate, concise, and timely written communication skills are crucial if you're going to succeed in a remote setting. Candidates who demonstrate this ability across their application process, from the content in their resume, cover letter or application form, through to technical interviews, and even in their emails with the recruiter do stand out." <https://gitlab.com/rdouglas-gitlab>.
- Duhigg, C. (2014). *The power of habit: why we do what we do in life and business*. Turtleback Books.
- Facebook -Log In or Sign Up. (2020). <https://www.facebook.com/>.
- Glei, J. K., & Belsky, S. (2013). *Manage your day-to-day*. Amazon Publ.
- Grant, A. (2020). *Adam Grant, Author of Give and Take*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egUK2zaZlo>.
- Harper, E. (2016, April 26). Weak Ties Matter.
<https://techcrunch.com/2016/04/26/weak-ties-matter/runch.com/2016/04/26/weak-ties-matter/>.
- Kate, M. (2016, January 5). *Optimize Interview: Deep Work with Cal Newport*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9K4_3BZz8s.
- Kate, M. (2018, September 19). *Adventures in Untethered Living*. <http://escapingthe9to5.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2019, December 7). *Maren Kate*. <https://marenkate.com/>.

Kate, M. (2019, March 28). *Find Your Purpose In Life And Define Your Best Self*. <https://uniqueability.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Airtable Organize anything you can imagine*. <https://airtable.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Airtable*. <https://airtable.com/tblCg6lFIhsCevcQR/viwRz0ydBDg5e0lxB/recAzd8J4ljrBXQdg>.

Kate, M. (2020). *All Raise*. <https://www.allraise.org/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *AngelList*. <https://angel.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Avra Talent: Remote recruiting made easy*. <https://avratalent.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Boomerang for Gmail: Scheduled sending and email reminders*. <http://www.boomeranggmail.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Cake: Free Resume/CV Builder & Templates*. <https://www.cakeresume.com/en>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Canva*. <https://www.canva.com>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Cardigan*. <https://www.gocardigan.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Careerjet Jobs & Careers in the USA*. <https://www.careerjet.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Careers - work at TaskRabbit*. <https://www.taskrabbit.com/careers>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Carrd*. <https://carrd.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Crunchboard Jobs*. <https://www.crunchboard.com/products>.

Kate, M. (2020). *DataRobot Careers: Join the Machine Learning Revolution*. <http://www.datarobot.com/careers/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Deseat me: Clean up your online presence*. <https://deseat.me/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Dribbble -Discover the world's top designers & creatives*. <https://dribbble.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Engaging Quizzes, Personalized Facebook Messenger & SMS*. <https://www.octaneai.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Find email addresses in seconds • Hunter (Email Hunter)*. <https://hunter.io/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Flow CV: Free Online Resume Builder*. <https://flowcv.io/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *HUMANS*. <https://humans.fyi/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Indeed*. <https://www.indeed.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Instagram*. <https://www.instagram.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Job Search Engine: SimplyHired*. <http://www.simplyhired.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *LinkedIn - Log In or Sign Up*. <https://www.linkedin.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *LinkedIn Job Search*. <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Monica*. <https://www.monicaHQ.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Persona*. <https://persona.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Personal Network, term*. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/interact>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Pinterest*. <https://www.pinterest.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Product Positioning Definition - What is Product Positioning*.
<https://www.shopify.com/encyclopedia/product-positioning>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Reply.io*. <https://emails.reply.io/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Resume Worded*. <https://resumeworded.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Role Spark: Free Resume Reviews*. <https://rolespark.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Social Book Post Manager*.
<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/social-book-post-manager/ljfidlkcmdmmibngdfikhffffdmphjae?hl=en-US>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Squarespace: Build a Website – Website Builder*.
<https://www.squarespace.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Standard Resume: Effortlessly build a memorable resume*.
<https://standardresume.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *The fastest way to share a moment!* <https://www.snapchat.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Tumblr*. <https://www.tumblr.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *We Are Inde*. <https://inde.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *We are what we do*. <http://meetup.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *What's your next destination?* <https://www.airbnb.com/careers>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Will my tweets get me fired?* <https://willmytweetsgetmefired.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Work and Travel Abroad Programs for Professionals: Remote Year*.
<https://www.remoteyear.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Wozber: Free resume builder for modern job seekers*.
<https://www.wozber.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *YOLO*. <https://onyolo.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Your personal homepage*. <https://about.me/>.

Kate, M. (2020). *Zip Recruiter Job Search - Millions of Jobs Hiring Near You*.
<https://www.ziprecruiter.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020, August 15). *Peter principle*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_principle.

Kate, M. (2020, August 24). *CliftonStrengths by Gallup Inc*.
https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252137/home.aspx?utm_source=google.

Kate, M. (2020, July 7). *Work Remotely and Travel*. <https://wifitribe.co/>.

Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *16 Personalities*. <https://www.16personalities.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *1Password*. <https://1password.com/>.

Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Amazon.com*. <https://www.amazon.com/>.

- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Clarity.fm*. <https://clarity.fm/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Dashlane*. <https://www.dashlane.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Effortless security from anywhere*. <https://www.lastpass.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Grammarly*. <https://www.grammarly.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Inde on Air Podcast with Maren Kate*.
<https://marenkate.com/the-podcast/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Indie Hackers Podcast*. <https://www.indiehackers.com/podcast>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Kolbe A™ Index: Instinctive Strengths Assessment*.
<https://www.kolbe.com/kolbe-a-index/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Lynda*. <https://www.lynda.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *MasterClass*. <https://www.masterclass.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *reddit*. <https://www.reddit.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *The Knowledge Project Podcast*.
<https://fs.blog/knowledge-project/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Udemy*. <https://www.udemy.com/>.
- Kate, M. (2020, September 1). *Zappos*. <https://www.zappos.com/>.
- Kate, M., & Walden, E. (2020). *Inde on Air -Hacks to finding opportunity in a recession . other*.
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1Fn0mAntzWGnUbFRfdJRyA>.
- Kate, M., & Wikipedia. (2020, August 27). *Locus of control*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locus_of_control.
- Khan, T., & Kate, M. (2020). *When you are early in your career choose roles that give you experience over cash. Think of each job as an inch on your resume. You need the first one, to get the second one, the second will help get the third... Other things to consider are the company's brand, is this a role that will give you experience and work you can point to? Considering the size of the firm as well, a smaller company or startup means you will get more responsibility and be involved in more aspects of the business."* .
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tamarakhan>.
- Larssen, A. G. (2020, June 19). *How to Ask for a Professional Reference on Email*.
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-email-template-that-guarantees-your-reference-will-say-all-the-right-things>.
- MIT. (2020). (working paper). *MIT: COVID & Remote Work: An early look at U.S. Data*.
Retrieved from https://john-joseph-horton.com/papers/remote_work.pdf
- Newport, C. (2012, October 24). *Passion or problem solving?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwOdU02SE0w>.

- Production, I., Baker, D. C., & Kate, M. (2020, June 18). *Inde On Air with Maren Kate: 021: Essentials for today's job search and how to stay focused on the big picture of your career with David C. Baker on Apple Podcasts*.
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/inde-on-air-with-maren-kate/id1467214647?i=1000478654200>.
- Rhoten, R. (2020, January 6). *Podcasts to help you build your brand and boost your CareerKred*. <http://www.ryanrhoten.com/podcast/>.
- Ries, A., & Trout, J. (2001). *Positioning: the battle for your mind*. McGraw-Hill.
- SADEGHI, H. A. B. I. B. (2019). *Clarity Cleanse: 12 steps to finding renewed energy, spiritual fulfillment, and emotional ... healing*. GRAND CENTRAL PUB.
- Shattuck, M. (2020). *Write Your Own Positioning Statement: Three Things I Learned From My Career Coach, Part #2*.
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/three-things-i-learned-from-my-career-coach-part-2-shattuck-csm/>.
- Shattuck, M. D. (2020, July 12). *Miles Shattuck Online*. <http://www.milesshattuck.com/>.
- Sinek, S., & Kate, M. (2009, September 28). *Start with "Why" how great leaders inspire action*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKE_VuA.
- Todd, B. (2020). *Key Ideas by Ben Todd & 80,000 Team* [web log].
<https://80000hours.org/key-ideas/>.
- Urban, T. (2019, November 6). *How to Pick a Career (That Actually Fits You)*.
<https://waitbutwhy.com/2018/04/picking-career.html>.
- Ware, B. (2019). *The top five regrets of the dying: a life transformed by the dearly departing*. Hay House Inc.
- Wikipedia. (2020, August 15). *4 P's "Marketing mix"*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketing_mix.
- Wikipedia. (2020, July 8). *Positioning (marketing)*.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positioning_\(marketing\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positioning_(marketing)).
- Wilkerson, M., & Kate, M. (2020, August 8). *The future of internships, apprenticeships and learning on the job with Matt Wilkerson of Paragon One*.
<https://blog.inde.co/internships-matt-wilkerson-paragon-one/>.