



# How To Find a Job in Portland

8 Steps to a Meaningful  
Career in the Rose City







Portland is a great place to live, but a tough place to find work. The local job market has simply not kept pace with the rapid population growth.

Whether you're a native Oregonian, a transplant, or an aspirational Portlander, finding meaningful and well-paying work can be a challenge.

At Mac's List we get asked all the time for our advice on landing work in Portland. We have dozens of articles dedicated to this topic, but we put together this guide to show you the most important things you can do to find success in the Portland job market.

Here is our proven eight-step roadmap for finding a job in Portland.



**111 new people  
move to Portland  
every day.**





## Step 1: Be clear about what you want

A lot of job seekers say: “I’m willing to do anything” or “I’m open to any opportunity.” This is not a winning strategy.

Flexibility is good... but a complete lack of professional focus won’t impress anyone, especially in a job market like Portland’s which is loaded with skilled and passionate candidates.

The more you know—and communicate—your professional interests and needs, the easier it will be to find work in Portland. Focus simplifies your entire job search process, particularly the amount of time spent applying for jobs.

The alternative is the “spray-and-pray” approach of applying to any remotely interesting job. This tactic wastes a lot of energy and [simply does not work](#).

Plus, when you focus on the jobs that most interest you, you’re more likely to end up with a position you actually enjoy!







## Step 2: Polish your online presence

What might a prospective employer see if they Googled you right now? Would they find a trustworthy, talented professional or a hard-partying spring breaker?

It's a fact of modern job searching: nearly all employers research applicants on social media before inviting them in for an interview. So make sure your online house is in order!

- Review all your social media accounts.
- Delete or make private any questionable content.
- If Googling your name produces something embarrassing, try to bury these results with positive content.

Most importantly, make sure your LinkedIn profile is polished, professional, and up-to-date.



**At least 80% of employers use Google to screen candidates.**





### Step 3: Build a network in Portland

You know the adage: it's all about who you know. This is especially true in a small town like Portland.

Up to [80% of jobs in Portland never get publicly advertised](#). These opportunities are circulated solely by word-of-mouth, and employers strongly prefer candidates recommended by their professional contacts.

Networking plugs you into Portland's hidden job market. Building professional relationships in the community makes you a known and trusted candidate for future work opportunities.

And you're in luck: Portland has a robust professional networking scene! Whether you're interested in the [nonprofit space](#), the [private sector](#), or any [specialized professional area](#), you can find a relevant networking group in the Rose City.

You can also use social media to find and connect with professionals in your field.





## Step 4: Conduct informational interviews

The single best thing you can do for your Portland job search is to start conducting informational interviews. There is no better way to get connected quickly into the Portland job scene.

Informational interviews are not about asking for a job. They are about introducing yourself to leaders in your desired field, building your network, and learning about how your skills line up with Portland employers' needs.

Strategically identify and reach out to professionals in the field or organization that most interests you. You'll find that many Portland pros are happy to share their time and insights.

[When done correctly](#), informational interviews can open up huge opportunities. Just remember to ask [this one question](#).







## Step 5: Look for opportunities and experience

In the course of your self-exploration and networking, you may find that you need additional skills or experience to land the job you want in Portland.

Interning, [temp work](#), and finding with a mentor are all great options, particularly if you're transitioning into a new field.

Portland is also home to world-class universities, if you're looking for a more formal education.

[Volunteering](#) can be a great way to beef up your resume and learn a new skill. It is also a fantastic way to meet people and prove yourself with an organization or in a new industry.



**Volunteering makes  
you a known and  
trusted professional.**





## Step 6: Know where to find job listings

Yes... we did say that 80% of jobs are never advertised, but that means that 20% are—and you don't want to ignore these opportunities!

The key is to know the local job boards that cater to your profession or industry. Focusing on two or three targeted niche boards ensures that you see the most relevant job openings and don't spend all day digging through online postings.

You hopefully already know about the [Mac's List job board](#). But there are many sites hyper-focused on specific Portland industries, like [fundraising](#), [public relations](#), and [nonprofits](#).



**You should spend no more than 20% of your time on job boards.**







## Step 7: Customize your resume and cover letter

It's important to have a polished, error-free application that highlights your experience, accomplishments, and professional interests. Many Portland job hunters miss the mark when they don't customize their resume and cover letter for each prospective job.

Remember: your resume is not a one-size-fits-all document!

[Frame your experience and accomplishments](#) around the needs of the employer, as described in the job description. This presents you as a solution provider—the kind of employee every organization is looking for!

You should also incorporate keywords and phrases from the job description into your application. Doing so improves your chances of passing through keyword-based automated applicant tracking systems.





## Step 8: Always follow up!

Here's another area where even the best Portland job seekers sometimes drop the ball: stay in touch with your professional network!

When you meet someone in a professional capacity, make sure you connect with them on LinkedIn. Stay up-to-date on their career and routinely check in with them.

Portland is a small town; everyone seems to know everyone. Small courtesies get remembered and reflect well on you.

If you've had an informational interview or a job interview, always, always, always [send a thank you note](#). Even if you don't land the job, writing a note is the best way to turn that employer or hiring manager into a future professional resource.





## About Mac's List

Since 2001, Mac's List has been Oregon's premier job search resource, an online community connecting thousands of passionate and talented people to meaningful work opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. A registered B Corp, Mac's List is an organization with a social mission: to give people the tools and knowledge they need to conduct effective job searches. We do this through our [job board](#), a [blog](#), a [podcast](#), and [online courses](#) all dedicated to the nuts and bolts of job hunting and career management. More than 80,000 people a month connect with Mac's List.

## About Mac Prichard

Mac Prichard, founder and publisher of [Mac's List](#), has been connecting people to rewarding work for decades. As a transplant to Portland, Oregon in the early 1990s, Mac learned the secrets to finding work in a competitive market. He has since become a recognized expert on job hunting and career management. Mac writes for the [Mac's List blog](#), hosts a weekly podcast, [Find Your Dream Job](#), and is the author of [Land Your Dream Job in Portland \(and Beyond\)](#) and [Land Your Dream Job Anywhere](#).

---

**Contact us anytime**

**mac@macslist.org**  
**www.macslist.org**

---

