

# FAQs



## What does a “proactive job search” look like to an employer?

- The candidate has been managing his/her early career to obtain **experiences that progressively build on each other.**
- The candidate digs below the surface to identify and research who the leading construction companies are in the geographic market(s) they are interested in. Candidate calls operations people in these companies directly to seek insight and/or employment.
- At a job fair or interview, the candidate can articulate what their job search strategy is. For instance, “I am looking for a privately-held company that is aggressive in developing its people, and has a reputation for excellence with customers, architects, subs, and employees alike.”
- The candidate insists on talking to all the firms on their short-list in order to choose the one company that best fits them for the long term. This includes having a clear sense of what “best fit” means to them by the time they near the end of their search.
- The candidate has challenging, insightful questions prepared ahead of time.
- The candidate has done homework on a company and can articulate the basics of what a company is about at the beginning of an interview.

## What is the fastest way to find who the major contractors are in a given market?

- Search [www.enr.com](http://www.enr.com) or [www.midwestconstructionmag.com](http://www.midwestconstructionmag.com)!!!
- Keyword search on the net – “Top Contractors”

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## How do I find out which companies are hiring?

- Most strong, healthy companies are **ALWAYS** looking to hire great talent regardless of market conditions.
- Approach the companies that fit what you want, and pursue them proactively and professionally.

## What can I do to stand apart from other candidates?

- Be **PROACTIVE** in your job search. See above.
- Show a track record of contributing to any team or organization you have been part of. How was that organization (i.e. fraternity) better because of your involvement?
- Every candidate claims to have a strong work ethic; show the proof! What are some examples of circumstances in which you were expected to do a certain thing and, on your own, went beyond the call of duty?
- Offer a succinct resume focused on construction experience and leadership contributions.
- Firm handshake and consistent eye contact. Let your nervous energy work in your favor... be energized and enthusiastic!
- Talk more in terms of "we" and "us" instead of "I" or "me". Be interested and confident, but also show humility. Explain your contributions within the team.
- Be able to verbalize why construction is for you.

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## What are the fundamental pieces of information I should know about a construction company before interviewing?

- What kinds of customers do they serve, and what kinds of projects do they build?
- How big are the majority of projects they build?
- Are they a “Builder” or a “Manager”? What type of company?
- What geographies do they serve?
- What services do they offer?
- How much work do they put in place each year? What is the trend for the past several years? What is their current backlog?
- How many people do they employ?

## I have no experience in construction yet. What are some ways for me to break in?

- Labor for a self-performing General Contractor or a Subcontractor. The key is getting time on a job site in order to maximize the learning experience. For instance, even though you might be hauling brick up a scaffold or even sweeping a floor, you will have opportunities to observe and ask questions of others on site. Ask questions that build on each other. Practice connecting the dots, so to speak, by showing interest.
- Approach a GC or a CM about some sort of assistant field office support role. Be creative and persistent, but not annoying. These tasks will get you familiar with some of the basic job site work flows, documentation, construction concepts, and terminology AND give you the chance to talk with others in the business.
- Participate actively in construction related activities offered by your university. For instance: regional and national Construction Management or Design/Build Team Competitions, working directly for your university in their construction or facilities departments, attending company-sponsored job site visits, attending company-taught workshops or classes, taking leadership roles in CM or AGC student organizations or in non-profit programs like Habitat for Humanity, etc.
- Work part-time during the school year for a contractor near your campus. Roles vary (see above).

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## What are some creative ways to learn what a GC or CM is really like, both internally and externally?

- Ask for names of a few employees with titles and phone numbers and call a few of them, especially those hired in the last 3-5 years. Ask them the same questions you asked the others in the company. Compare answers. Is there consistency? Are the answers positive? Do the people seem motivated and happy?
- Ask for a list of some of the company's more regular subs. Ask them what it is like to work for that company. Also ask them how they compare this company to other top companies in the market. Ask them about how this GC/CM treats its employees.
- Ask what the average tenure is across the entire organization. Ask how many of the current PMs or Superintendents have been with this company for more than 5 years. Ask about the process and opportunity for advancement. Drill down for the reasons why people have left.
- Ask about the percentage of individuals that have been promoted from within by title.

## I'm a Senior and have been contacted by a head-hunter/recruiter. Should I let them send my resumes to GC's and CM's?

- Having someone else do your work for you may not be a good way to start a career. Planning and executing your search on your own is yet another opportunity to learn and grow as a professional. Further, while you may get more job leads handed to you, understand that this scenario may scare away companies who do not want to spend the \$15,000 (approximate) your head-hunter will charge them.

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If you want a job, you need to go after it! Cold Calling is an effective tool if done right. Here are the steps to making a Cold Call:

## 1. RESEARCH

Analyze the market, companies you are interested in, competitors, and positions that interest you.

## 2. FOCUS

Do homework on the company you are calling; position(s) that you are interested in; the person you seek to contact there, know why you are calling, prepare questions you can't learn through the Internet or general research.

## 3. GET FRIENDLY WITH GATEKEEPERS

Be pleasant to whoever picks up the phone when you are cold calling... eventually ask if you could have a cell number of an individual who is currently working in the role for which you are interested.

## 4. BE PERSISTENT

Be persistent, but in a tactful manner. Challenge the gatekeeper on the other end of the line so you are able to talk with someone about their job and what they do.

## 5. HAVE THE CALL

Get to the point. Practice with friends beforehand, be considerate of your target's time, thank them.

## 6. SEND FOLLOW UP

Thank you message for their time, send resume.