



2010 Job Search Trends Impacting Students and Recent Graduates

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About this Survey

AfterCollege conducts periodic surveys to take the pulse of our industry and to see how current events and trends are impacting college students and alumni. AfterCollege had the following goals for this survey:

- Gauge the level of difficulty of job searching and any trend changes in 2010 compared to 2009
- Assess the condition of the job market
- Uncover the most useful and relevant job search channels
- Gather feedback to help employers attract and retain entry-level talent

Survey Methodology

AfterCollege ran the survey during May and gathered **560 complete survey responses**. The survey was passively promoted as an announcement over the four-week period in AfterCollege Career Network Digests, which are emailed each week to students and alumni. Our goal was to have a random, balanced level of responses from undergraduates, seniors, graduate students and recent graduates. We also wanted to have representation for each of the areas where we typically serve job seekers and employers, including healthcare, engineering, technology, business, and life sciences.

Response Break Down

By Graduation Status

The largest respondent groups were alumni, followed by graduate students and seniors.

| Answer Options | Response % | Response Count |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Alumni | 35.8% | 199 |
| Graduate Student | 27.5% | 153 |
| Senior | 19.8% | 110 |
| Junior | 7.4% | 41 |
| Sophomore | 2.3% | 13 |
| Freshman | 1.4% | 8 |
| Other | 5.8% | 32 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 556 |

By Discipline

We also asked respondents to classify themselves in one of the following broad areas.

| Answer Options | Response % | Count |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Engineering | 33.8% | 184 |
| Nursing | 26.8% | 146 |
| Business | 11.9% | 65 |
| Life Sciences | 10.1% | 55 |
| Allied Health | 6.4% | 35 |
| Humanities | 6.4% | 35 |
| Tech | 4.6% | 25 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 545 |

By GPA

Our users are generally on the top tier of the academic spectrum, as measured by GPA, and the respondents to this survey reflect this trend.

| Answer Options | Response % | Count |
|----------------|------------|-------|
| Below 2.0 | 0.5% | 3 |
| 2.0 - 2.5 | 4.0% | 22 |
| 2.6 - 3.0 | 13.9% | 77 |
| 3.1 - 3.5 | 36.7% | 203 |
| 3.6 - 4.0 | 42.9% | 237 |
| Above 4.0 | 2.0% | 11 |

Summary of Findings

When comparing this survey to last year's, which was launched at a time when the job market had truly bottomed out, we discovered that although recent statistics point to an economy that is gradually improving, the job search situation for entry-level job seekers remains grim.

Times Remain Tough

Eighty six percent of respondents said they were finding the job search process difficult or extremely difficult, compared to 78% last year. Graduates are most likely competing with more experienced workers and also with graduates from 2009 who still have not found jobs.

Moderate Success

For the 14% of respondents who said that they were having a moderate or easy time finding a job, we asked them to evaluate the channels that have been the most productive. The top sources were online job boards, applying directly to the company, talking to friends and family and employee referrals, which are in-line with the recommendations we make to employers.

Social Networking

Social network usage among our users remains high, with Facebook's dominant popularity growing from 73% in 2009 to 78% in 2010. LinkedIn was the second most popular site, but with only slightly over 9% of our users saying they use it frequently. MySpace has been virtually abandoned in favor of Facebook, while Twitter's popularity is slowly picking up among our demographic.

Despite this heavy usage, only 16% of respondents found social networks to be effective in finding a job. This figure is only slightly up from the 11% reported last year.

The Best Resources for Jobs

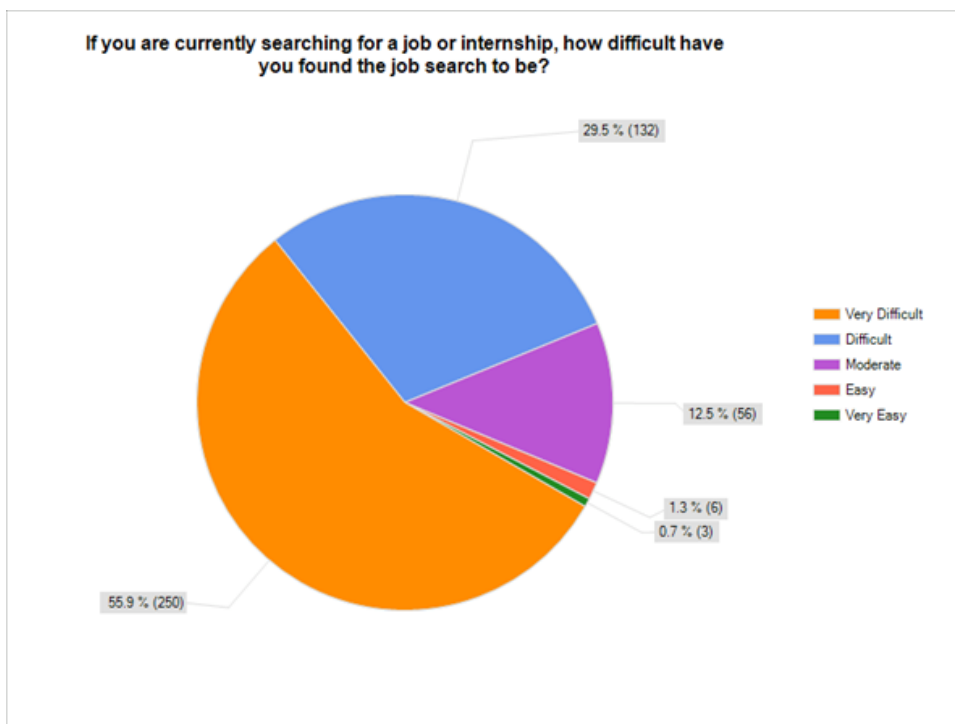
Online job boards were rated as the most effective channel, with about 65% of respondents choosing this as their top resource. Niche boards and other job portals are rising in popularity as job seekers become savvier with using search engines. Second was applying to the company directly, selected by 63% of respondents. Next were speaking to someone who works at the company of interest and talking to friends and family, at 58% and 55% respectively.

Detailed Research Findings

On a Scale of One to Ten

We asked individuals looking for jobs or internships to specify the level of ease or difficulty they were having in their search. The majority, almost 56%, said they are having a **very difficult** time searching for a job, 29.6% classified their search to a lesser degree as **difficult**. Almost 13% of respondents selected **moderate**.

Only 2%, or nine respondents, said they were having an easy time finding a job.



| If you are currently searching for a job or internship, how difficult have you found the job search to be? | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Very Difficult | 55.9% | 250 |
| Difficult | 29.5% | 132 |
| Moderate | 12.5% | 56 |
| Easy | 1.3% | 6 |
| Very Easy | 0.7% | 3 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 447 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 113 |

No One Said Job Hunting Was Easy, Except For...

We looked at the minority who selected 'easy' to describe the difficulty of their job search and ranked them as a percentage of the total respondents in their field.

| Discipline | Found it easy to find job | Total Respondents | |
|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Engineering | 3 | 184 | 50% |
| Tech | 2 | 24 | 33.3% |
| Life Sciences | 1 | 54 | 16.7% |
| Business | 0 | 65 | 0% |
| Allied Health | 0 | 35 | 0% |
| Humanities | 0 | 35 | 0% |
| Life Sciences | 0 | 54 | 0% |
| Nursing | 0 | 144 | 0% |
| Total | 6 | 594 | 1.4% |

Engineering majors usurped Allied Health to claim the top spot this year. This is not surprising considering a recent Business Week¹ article that lists engineering as the most lucrative degree to obtain, while recent studies have also posited that engineering graduates will remain in high demand for many years to come.

The chart above reflects the current crisis in the healthcare industry, pointing to an atypical drop in opportunities in the allied health and nursing sectors. In previous years, these jobs were plentiful, but layoffs and stricter job experience requirements have squeezed out many entry-level positions.

GPA as a Factor

We looked at the GPA of those who found it easy to find a job and noted a correlation. As seen below, respondents with a GPA of 2.6 or higher reported having an easier time finding a job, while no one with a GPA below 2.5 selected 'easy.'

| GPA | Respondents | |
|-----------|-------------|-------|
| 2.6 - 3.0 | 2 | 33.3% |
| 3.1 - 3.5 | 2 | 33.3% |
| 3.6 - 4.0 | 2 | 33.3% |
| Total | 6 | 100% |

¹http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/blogs/mba_admissions/archives/2010/03/engineering_majors_top_list_of_highest-paid_college_graduates.html

The Best and Worst Job Search Methods

One of the most revealing questions we asked our respondents was to choose what options they considered most effective in their job search. We provided an assortment of selections to get an accurate depiction of how respondents go about their search.

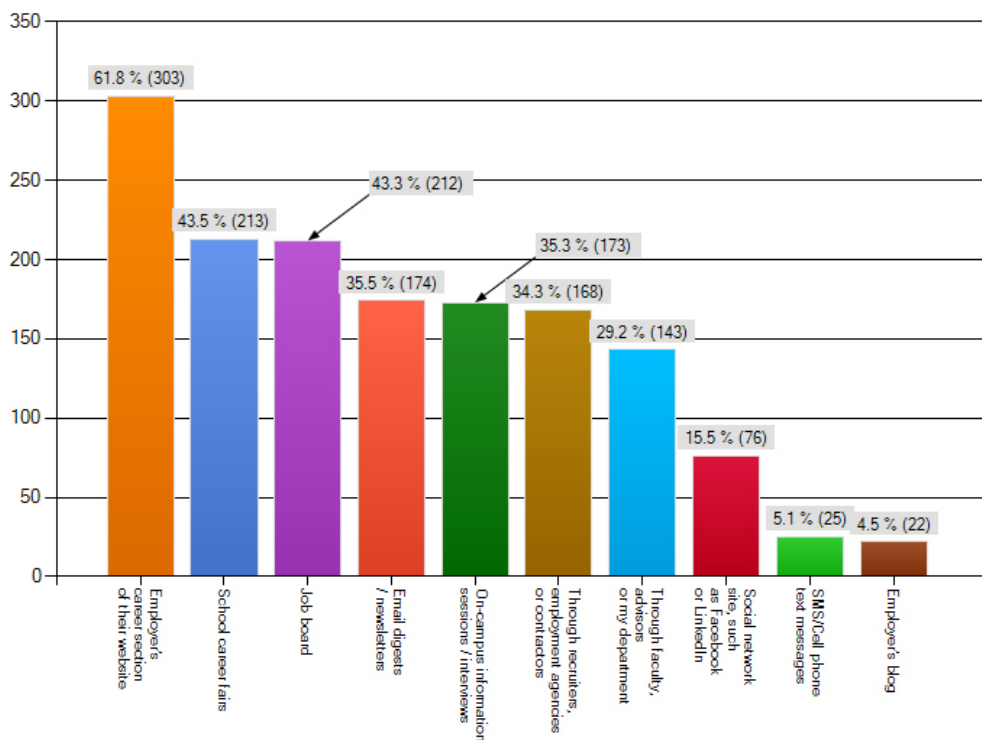
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|
| Search an online job board (AfterCollege, Monster, CareerBuilder) | 65.3% | 356 |
| Apply directly to the company/organization | 63.1% | 344 |
| Speak to someone who already works at the company of interest | 57.8% | 315 |
| Speak to friends and/or family members | 54.7% | 298 |
| Visit the career section of the organization/corporation's site | 49.5% | 270 |
| Attend a school career fair | 44.0% | 240 |
| Contact an employment contractor, agency, or recruiter | 42.9% | 234 |
| Attend on-campus information sessions/interviews | 33.0% | 180 |
| Speak to a professor, teacher, instructor, or dean | 30.3% | 165 |
| Visit the career center at your school | 26.2% | 143 |
| Network at an association or club (trade/industry) | 18.9% | 103 |
| Social networking site, such as Facebook or LinkedIn | 16.0% | 87 |
| Blog that pertained to a career interest | 7.0% | 38 |
| | <i>answered question</i> | 545 |
| | <i>skipped question</i> | 15 |

- **Job boards are the most effective resource**, selected by almost 66% of respondents. Despite heavy use of social networks, users still appear to find job boards as one of the most effective methods for finding jobs. Industry pundits who denounce job boards for being obsolete and ineffective need only glance at this data to realize that job sites remain a stalwart competitor to other channels.
- **Applying directly on company's web site** ranked as the second most effective method for researching jobs. As more company career sites become optimized for search engines and upgraded with interactive capabilities, job seekers are turning to these sites to not only apply for jobs, but also to get a glimpse of company culture made possible by the use of videos, blogs, and chat forums. At AfterCollege, we observe a strong pattern of job seekers discovering opportunities on our site and then going directly to the company web site to apply.
- **Employee referrals** continue to rank high as a valuable job search resource. Knowing someone at a company or finding a lead through social networks in order to get a referral is still a consistent and dependable plan of action.
- **Social networks** ranked surprisingly low at 16%, but showed a 5% increase over the past year. While the increase may seem minor, it demonstrates that social networks are becoming a more relevant option for job seekers.

Effective Communication Methods for Employers

We asked users to select their preferred channels for receiving employer communications about jobs and career-related information. Employer web sites and career sections ranked the highest, with school career fairs and job boards in a virtual tie. Employer blogs were at the bottom of the list while text messaging/SMS ranked the second lowest at 5.1%. We were surprised by the findings on text messaging given the popularity of this channel with employers. However, it seems that text messaging is not as popular with entry-level job seekers.

Most preferred methods for employers to communicate about career opportunities



On-campus job fairs and information sessions are important channels that employers should always leverage. Faculty and advisors, while not career counselors, are strong influencers on campus and they should also be used as channels to communicate with students. Social media is slowly creeping up as a communication channel, but it's not there yet. Text messaging is far behind.

Social Networking

Social networks are clearly very popular. But with so many companies, users and advertisers flooding into these channels, it can be very difficult to pin down the real value of participation. How companies and advertisers will stay relevant within the context of these powerful sites remains in question, especially as the most popular networks become super-saturated with ads and spam. What's more, the ongoing battle over privacy concerns may soon lead many users to purge their accounts, or search for alternatives that provide more control over their personal information.

| How often do you utilize the following social networking sites? Please rank all that apply. | | | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|--------|-------|----------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Rating Average | Response Count |
| Facebook | 326 | 106 | 51 | 65 | 1.74 | 548 |
| LinkedIn | 44 | 120 | 89 | 283 | 3.14 | 536 |
| Twitter | 27 | 32 | 69 | 398 | 3.59 | 526 |
| One via my school network | 21 | 34 | 32 | 434 | 3.69 | 521 |
| MySpace | 3 | 24 | 73 | 422 | 3.75 | 522 |
| MyYearbook.com | 1 | 5 | 8 | 506 | 3.96 | 520 |
| Hi5 | 1 | 2 | 19 | 498 | 3.95 | 520 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | | | | | 552 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | | 8 |

- Facebook is most popular with 326 respondents claiming to use the site frequently.
- MySpace has become extremely unpopular with our audience
- Twitter is gaining in popularity, but doesn't rank high as a reliable job search resource.
- While social networking sites are used heavily by our audience, but only 16% of the respondents found them effective for finding a job.

Recommendations

We have made some interpretations, but we have also presented you with the response data so that you can reach your own conclusions, and develop your own strategies. Here are some of our recommendations.

For Employers

- **Focus on recent grads in 2010 to stack your talent pipeline.** If recruiting employees with disabilities, minorities, or veterans is a big initiative at your company, so should the recruitment of entry-level job seekers. Do not ignore this highly talented, flexible, and capable segment of the job market. When the baby boomers start to retire in droves, you must have a waiting room packed with talented people ready to fill their shoes. There has never been more top-level talent available and eagerly searching for employment.
- **Recalibrate your social media recruiting strategy.** The most popular networks are becoming so clogged with fan pages and ads that these tactics are quickly losing strength. If entry-level job seekers aren't looking for jobs on social networks, and don't find them helpful in finding a job, then don't post your entry-level jobs there. Instead, focus on the channels that will provide you with the greatest measurable return on your investment.
- **Don't forget the fundamentals of college recruiting, they work.** Visit college campuses, reach out to faculty, student officers and key influencers, and choose targeted media to connect with your desired audience and to drive them to your careers page.
- **Ensure you have a good careers page and a simple application process.** Have a simple, well-designed, and informative careers section on your site. Most importantly, ensure you have a dedicated section for college and entry-level candidates with entry-level jobs and internships. This conveys that you are serious about college recruiting. Also make sure you have an easy process for them to apply for jobs. Nothing turns applicants away faster than a lengthy application form. Again, ensure you use the right media for driving the relevant traffic to your site. Quality traffic is a lot better than just high traffic.

About AfterCollege

AfterCollege is an online professional platform that connects college students, alumni and employers through customized career networks at colleges and professional associations across the country.

We started AfterCollege with a simple goal: to create a better way for job seeking students and alumni to connect with the right employers. Today, AfterCollege powers the largest number of career networks on the internet, using its patented process to deliver thousands of exclusive opportunities to students and alumni each day.

Our proprietary network and job distribution technology translate into relevant career-related information for job seekers and into savings of up to 80% in cost-per-hire for employers.

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