

Quest for Employment: Lessons From The Job Search Adventure 1

# Quest for Employment: Lessons From The Job Search Adventure

(SAMPLE)

By Steven Savage

**Quest For Employment:  
Lessons From The Job Search Adventure**

(Sample, for the full book go to <http://www.questforemployment.com/>)

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AUTHOR: Steven Savage  
<http://www.stevensavage.com/>

First Edition

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Thanks to Orville Pearson, who first showed me what writing to help people find work was about. His work is worth reading for everyone interested in the job search:

<http://www.highlyeffectivejobsearch.com/>.

Thanks to Serdar, Lauren, Ewen, Jason, Tamara, Bonnie, and the rest of the “tribe” and everyone at <http://www.fantopro.com/>.

To everyone who supported me on my job searches. Thanks for being there.

**DEDICATION:**

This book is dedicated to every job searcher out there. I hope I manage to help some of you, and in turn you can help others.

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**The Full Book has more chapters, more advice, and more tips to help you in your job search!**

## Introduction

I'm Steven Savage. I try and help people with their careers.

For years I wrote and blogged about careers for geeks, fans, nerds, and otaku. I posted at <http://www.fantopro.com/>, did books (which you can find at <http://www.stevensavage.com/>), spoke at conventions, and more. I leveraged what I learned in my own careers to help people.

Then in 2012, I got laid off rather suddenly, and had to do a hardcore job search as I had no immediate options. That's how layoffs go after all, though I was a wee bit less philosophical at the time.

The search took me about three weeks, and was quite productive. During that quest for ideal employment, I tried pretty much every trick in my book and a few others - and I also kept track of what I learned during it. When I found a job, I wrote things up for <http://www.fantopro.com/> and published a series of columns, hoping to share my insights with job seekers.

After finishing the columns, I realized just how much I'd learned, and figured I'd find a way to polish it, share it, and make it more accessible. I figured a book was in order, and started working on it . . .

Oh, then I got laid off a few months later, right before the book was going to come out. Did I mention I worked in startups? Yeah, I worked in startups.

So I applied the knowledge I'd discovered, found a contract in about four weeks (well, I found one before that but it got

cancelled), and went back to work. I also went back to this book and added even more information, though a lot of my own advice had worked pretty well.

Fortunately I got the book out without any more layoffs, though now I'm afraid to jinx it. So let's move on.

So what exactly is this you're reading, beyond the result of blood, sweat, ranting, and the Wheel Of Layoffs?

It's a collection of specific lessons learned by me, a Senior Project Manager, looking for work in Silicon Valley twice during 2012. Most of the "lessons" were originally blog posts, and have been rewritten or expanded, and new content added.

Or in short, it's the expanded, somewhat saner version of a really big braindump of research, ranting, and insight. It's also arranged to be more useful for you, the job seeker.

I deliberately wrote down the lessons that were broadly applicable to job searchers who weren't, well, me. There were plenty of unshared insights that really only matter to such a limited population they weren't included (I mean, are you a Project Manager?). I figured I'd keep things short and sweet - and useful.

These also aren't "basic" job search lessons – you can learn about the basics easy from the web or books. These are findings, variants on common themes, and additions to well-worn advice. Think of it as "extra scenes" on the job search.

I hope they help you in your own job search, and that the lessons remain relevant for a long time. Considering the state of the economy as I write this in late 2012, I have the feeling we'll all be trying to improve our job searches for awhile.

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I hope the advice helps. Feel free to contact me at <http://www.stevensavage.com/> - I'm always up for feedback!

## Regional Issues And Location

**Summary:** Regional issues affect your job search in multiple ways; look for them and deal with them.

When I lost my job(s) I was living in Silicon Valley, which needless to say was helpful when looking for an IT-related job. At the same time I was helping out friends in other locations – and quickly realized that different places are very different job search-wise. This made me realize differences existed even in specific areas like, well, Silicon Valley.

(And yes, people argue over what “Silicon Valley” even is, and no I’m not getting into it.)

Yes, this is a “No sh\*t, Shatner” moment, yes it’s “obvious” but when you experience the contrast it’s also obvious that we have to deal with it. It’s also apparent how I didn’t get regional differences, and how anyone can miss them (that’s my defense anyway).

It’s easy to assume that places are too much alike. It’s easy to think just because two cities have banking centers, or two locations are big on IT, that they’re alike. They’re not. They can be radically different – and the job search is radically different in each.

Here’s what I found out:

- 1) Job titles can vary radically, especially from coast to coast (and sometimes even in regions). This was a great shock to me, but now it makes sense – there’s enough physical and cultural distance for this to happen. I saw first-hand how resumes could be re-interpreted based on job titles that were the same, but meant things

in different locations.

2) The usefulness of job search boards also varies highly (more on that later). Some regions will favor specific job boards – and certain boards – some won't.

3) The value of certain experiences and certifications – and how they're communicated – also varies among regions. Some certifications are more universal, and thus more valuable, but even then you need to communicate them right depending on where you live.

4) Understanding a region's actual layouts, transport, etc. can help a lot. My ability to discuss my commute and so forth really made a difference because it showed I understood issues of timeliness, commuting, and so on. In short, I knew how to get to the job, which shows forethought, awareness, and the ability to navigate insane road conditions.

Also if you've relocated, you look less ignorant knowing all this stuff.

5) Your history and how people react to it varies greatly from place to place. Know how your career history plays in the regions you target – and learn how to communicate it. In areas filled with startups, shorter times at jobs doesn't look as bad, or is expected (which I cover below)

6) Attitude also varies in your search. I've found Seattle, Silicon Valley, and Toronto to be less formal and more friendly, than other areas. I found New York to be more serious, but Boston was more casual than I expected. Of course that also can differ with professions.

7) Miscellaneous factors vary highly from region to region. Age, job history, specific experiences, your experience in travel, etc. may be important in one place and not so important at another.

One example of regional differences I encountered was seeing how people with a writing background were treated in Silicon Valley. Too often someone with “just” writing background was assumed to be a technical writer or general writer (a market that now and then oversaturate). The people with writing backgrounds had to identify more appropriate titles and communicate their backgrounds differently to stand out.

Another example is employment history. It’s a running joke among some people I know in Silicon Valley that people with short employment histories (2 years at each place) are unremarkable. At times I’ve even heard people talk of those staying in one spot a long time with suspicion. Meanwhile that seems to be less common elsewhere, at least in my experience.

So when doing a job search, make sure the region fits you – and make sure your strategy fits your region. If you are leaving one region for another, make a concerted effort to adapt your strategy and expectation to that region.

### **TO DOS:**

1) Keep a list of job search sites you use – and evaluate and re-evaluate them based on region. See what works for you and what doesn't – and remember they'll change over time. Remember what works in one region may not work in another.

2) Look for regional job search sources and try them out. I've often been surprised at how good ones supported by state/local governments were.

- 3) Investigate the ways titles of jobs change, differ from expectations, or may be different than you think. Searches on job sites may help you realize other titles may fit you – or altered. Professional associations will also help you find out about positions. Oh, and of course talking to people.
- 4) When using job boards, vary your job search language by region – by determining what terms work best in search engines, how recruiters describe positions, and so on. Learn your region's “language” for jobs.
- 5) Quiz people you know in the regions you'd like to work in – or if you're not sure about a region – to find what they know about job searches and differences. Good networking always helps.
- 6) Look job postings and [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) profiles of positions and people around the world can give you a good idea of how titles, positions, and descriptions of jobs can vary.

**IF YOU LIKED THIS SAMPLE** be sure to look for the book at Amazon and Lulu.com. You can purchase it here:

<http://www.questforemployment.com/>

## About The Author

Steven Savage is a lifetime geek. Starting with a childhood interest in science, science fiction and computers, to an IT career that started in his twenties, he's never stopped being an unrepentant enthusiast for video games, technology, media, and more.

His goal is to help his fellow geeks, fans, and otaku realize their professional potential. To that end he writes books, blogs at <http://www.fantopro.com/>, speaks at conventions, and coaches job seekers.

He lives in Silicon Valley, which, if you think about it, is really appropriate.

To contact Steve, please visit <http://www.stevensavage.com/>.

### Steve's Other Books:

Focused Fandom: Fanart, Fanartists, and Careers  
(<http://www.focusedfandom.com/>)

Focused Fandom: Cosplay, Costuming, and Careers  
(<http://www.focusedfandom.com/>)

Fan To Pro: Unlocking Career Insights With Your Hobbies  
(<http://www.fantoprobook.com/>)

Convention Career Connection: Putting the Pro Into Your Con  
(<http://www.conventioncareerconnection.com/>)

Progeek Rising: The Best of Fan To Pro Volume 1  
(<http://www.bestoffantopro.com/>)

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Inhuman Resources: The Best of Fan To Pro Volume 2  
(<http://www.bestoffantopro.com/>)