

The Career Game

CHAMPIONSHIPS

...and how to win



Use powerful strategies to beat other searchers

for the right job in less time.

Larry J. Linden, Ph. D.
with Joseph Parker

Two Methods

THE CAREER GAME **CHAMPIONSHIPS** *and How to Win*

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and Joseph Parker

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Table Of Contents

I. The Problem: The LIMP Method	I
The LIMP Method	2
Direct Drawbacks of the LIMP Method	2
Looking at Job Listings	3
Inquiring about Jobs	5
Meeting with Headhunters	6
Papering the World with Résumés	7
Indirect Drawbacks of the LIMP Method	8
Ignoring Motivations	8
Ignoring the Follow-Up	8
Ignoring Quality Assurance	9
2. The Breakthrough: The SOLID Method	II
The SOLID Method	12
Direct Benefits of the SOLID Method	13
Strategy	13
Organization	14
Logic	15
Innovation	15
Determination	16

1



The Problem: The LIMP Method

Most people think they know how to perform an effective job search. Certain techniques have been passed down through the years and touted as “the way” to go about getting a job. To be sure, by and large, people do get jobs when they use them. So those methods keep getting reused, time and time again, whenever the time to change jobs or change careers comes around.

What I’ve found in my years as a career counselor is that the old methods aren’t even close to efficient and instead tend to lock people into patterns that have them continually landing in jobs that they don’t enjoy, without even the hope of breaking out into the *perfect job* that everyone hopes for.

Lately, technology—most obviously in the form of the Internet—has provided us with new ways to quickly get information about companies not only within miles of our homes, but around the globe. This new addition to the old bag of tricks has been heralded as a revolution in job or career change searches.

But even with all of the new information now available at our fingertips, people are still relying heavily on the same old methods, are not using the new technology in ways that leverage its full potential to benefit their searches, and absolutely are not using innovative and effective methods that separate them from the competition.

The approach that the vast majority of job seekers use can be summed up quite easily, and as you’ll see, there isn’t a lot of variation on the theme between searchers. Let’s take a look at the “typical” approach that I see people using and its drawbacks. After that, we’ll discuss how these typical methods ignore crucial elements that are critical to a successful search.

The LIMP Method

For as long as I have been working with professionals, I've noticed that nearly every single one goes about the career and job search process the same way. They use what I call the **LIMP** method:

- **L**ook at job listings in newspapers or on the Internet
- **I**nquire to see if anyone knows of any jobs or of any companies that are hiring
- **M**eeet with a recruiter or temporary agency
- **P**aper the world with résumés in the hopes that one sticks and they get hired.

Does this sound familiar to you? While not all job searchers follow these exact steps, they happen more often than not. And even if the process doesn't match exactly, my experience tells me that a mere handful of people use a complete search methodology that covers all of the pieces of the puzzle from initial inquiries to signing on the dotted line.

...most of those I've talked to agree that when it comes down to it, they usually take... whatever job comes along.

Using the LIMP method will probably get you a job at some point, but there are a number of serious drawbacks to this method. First and foremost, it is quite simply *not* the most efficient way to perform a search, and it is not likely to net you the dream job that you have been hoping for. In fact, most of those I've talked to agree that when it comes down to it, they usually take what is referred in the business as “the

low hanging fruit” — whatever job comes along. Sometimes it's a good, satisfying job in a decent company and sometimes it isn't. What it tells me is that most people are not in control of their career and are usually at the mercy of the business world. By taking the first thing that comes along, they are sacrificing the very things that are likely to make them happy in a job. I always find this to be a bit tragic because I know the result can be so much better. But instead of being a victor in their job search, they more often end up being a victim.

Direct Drawbacks of the LIMP Method

As I mentioned, there are a number of direct drawbacks to the LIMP method.

The first one, as you may have guessed, is that nearly everyone uses it. That means that almost every person trying to change jobs or careers is going through *exactly* the same steps that you are. This does nothing to distinguish you from all the other searchers.

Don't underestimate the power of being unique. If you want to have a successful and effective career or job transition, then everything that you use during your search—both your process and your materials—must be very different and of higher quality than what everyone else is using. Most people want to be unique in their job search, but they don't know how to achieve that goal, so they fall back on the LIMP method.

The second drawback to the LIMP method is that it places the power completely in the hands of the hiring organization. How can it be *your* dream job when *they* are setting the parameters? You have no control over the process; you are completely at the mercy of those on the hiring end of the equation. This not only has a negative effect on your self-worth, but in the vast majority of cases, you will end up with a “job in a box” — trying to shoehorn your skills into a job offered by the company instead of being able to generate a job that is tailored for your skills.

If you want to have a successful and effective career or job transition, then everything that you use... must be very different and of higher quality than what everyone else is using.

I know you're probably looking at the last statement and saying to yourself “that's impossible, I cannot get a company to *create* a new job tailored specifically to my skills.” Let me assure you that it's not impossible, and in fact if you follow the processes laid out in the ebooks that make up the body of *The Career Game Championships*, you will realize at the end of your search that you have done just that. I'll tell you how to make it happen.

But first, let's look at the specific drawbacks to each piece of the LIMP method.

Looking at Job Listings

The first element of the LIMP method is to “Look at job listings in newspapers or on the Internet.”

This seems like the obvious place to start, doesn't it? While that may be true, for most people, that's also where the search ends.

The problem with relying solely on job listings is that they're available to everyone. By using only this source, you've placed yourself into the heaviest competition for those jobs. Any person on your block that has similar skills to yours can look in that newspaper's classified listings and have access to the very same opportunity that you do.

I'll let you in on a secret here: The Internet has only made it worse. People often think that Internet job sites have revolutionized the job search, opening up access to jobs in a way never before available. In fact, Internet sites *have* revolutionized the process: now, instead of a job listing being available only to people who can purchase your local newspaper, they're available to *any person across the globe*. Instead of competing with people in your local area, you're literally competing with millions of people anywhere in the world who can log on to that Internet site. The reality is, with those listings being so available, your odds of capturing the attention of the hiring company have actually *gone down*.

The second challenge with job listings is that in most cases, once the listing has been prepared and placed, the parameters have been locked in. The hiring organization has settled on a very specific set of skills that they are looking for in a candidate, and by that time it's very difficult to change their mind. If your skills *are* an exact match, the match is still based on your past, not on where you want to go. If your skill set differs even slightly, you may not get consideration because it is very likely that so many people have responded to that ad that someone else's skill set *is* a perfect fit.

The third problem with relying on published listings is that it puts you at the mercy of the market. If the job market is down, fewer job listings are generated, so in turn there are fewer opportunities for you to follow. If the market is hot, there may be a plethora of listings at any one time, but they may still not be a good match for your skill set.

The Career Game Championships will show you how to use job listings to your benefit, but as one portion of a comprehensive job search process. It will show you how to find ways to open up the doors to opportunity using methods beyond prepared job listings that are also independent of the whims of the current job market. Finally it will open you up to the "Unpublished Job Market" that takes you beyond job listings entirely.

Revolt of a Different Kind

A former client of mine was able to land a position using the methods described the ebooks. When the time came to hire people for his own group, his boss told him to use a well-known Internet job posting site.

He dutifully filled out the listing. Though the job they were listing required using elements of the Internet, it was in no way a Web Design or Development job. In fact, he explicitly stated so in the listing.

Over the next two weeks he was bombarded with dozens of résumés, most of them from Web Designers or Software Developers. After trying in vain to keep up with them, he eventually got disgusted and stopped looking through them at all.

He eventually filled the position through his own business to business and personal network.

Still think Internet job sites are a revolution?

Inquiring about Jobs

The second element of the LIMP method is to “Inquire to see if anyone knows of any jobs or of any companies that are hiring.”

First, when performing this inquiry step, the searcher’s focus is often very narrow, limited only to people “in the industry” or to those that they think may have the proper connections. As we’ll show later, this narrow vision is an impediment in itself, since the networking contact that will bear fruit may be someone you know in a completely unrelated field, or more often still, someone you *don’t even know* at the start of your search.

Second, a serious drawback to this method is often the way it’s presented and the limited scope of the people you come in contact with.

By asking people specifically “Do you know of any companies that are hiring?” or “Do you know of any jobs?” you put them on the defensive. The honest answer in both cases may simply be “No.” But you are also subconsciously putting the impetus of finding a job on them; the psychological message is that they actually need to do the legwork for you.

In addition, if they were to point you toward—or even more specifically, recommend you for—a job, they are now in the “hot seat.” In that scenario their reputation is now at stake, since they were the one that recommended you or at the very least told someone that you were suited for the job. If for some reason you don’t work out in the position, they become exposed and their personal relationship or reputation with that person or organization may be tarnished. This alone may prevent them from connecting you to the right people and pointing you toward an opportunity.

The Career Game Championships will show you innovative and attractive ways to network—we’ll actually call it Resource Development—that go beyond people in the industry or people you know personally. It will also show you ways to approach people that not only prevents them from feeling defensive, but in fact makes them *want* to help you and provide better leads.

A Word About Networking

Many people think of the process of inquiring to their friends, colleagues, and perhaps past co-workers as “Networking.” In a very simplistic way it is, but as we’ll discover later, it’s not the best way, nor is it true networking.

Many searchers also believe that networking will be the answer to all their problems, and that by calling only on their network, that this will somehow provide them with a short, easy job search.

My experience has shown me while networking is a critical element of a complete job search, the expectation by a searcher that networking will lead to a quick and easy job search is not valid.

Meeting with Headhunters

The third element of the LIMP method is to “Meet with a recruiter or temporary agency.”

Recruiters and Temporary Agency personnel are only interested in placing you in jobs most like the ones you've already been in.

In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with this step but it is fraught with the same dangers that you find with relying solely on job listings.

First, despite appearances, recruiters—also known colloquially as “headhunters”—are not looking out for your best interest. They typically are paid by the hiring company and as such are interested in providing a perfect match between the résumés they have on file and the specifications

laid out by the hiring organization. They generally only want to assist you if they happen to have a matching “job requisition” sitting on their desk at the time your résumé arrives. If your list of skills doesn’t exactly match the criteria laid out in the listing, you aren’t likely to get a call from the recruiter.

Second, Recruiters and Temporary Agency personnel are *only* interested in placing you in jobs most like the ones you’ve already been in. This may be helpful, but only if you want to stay in the same box. For the majority of the population who would like to get out of their old patterns and into new situations this method will most likely work against you. The result is no call. This can be particularly frustrating since these organizations actually do have open jobs waiting to be filled—just not for you.

Third, there are hundreds of recruiters out there and many hiring companies will use only one or two of them. In addition, recruiters typically want you to sign up exclusively with their organization. When you put these two things together, the result is a severely limited set of opportunities that will be presented to you.

The Career Game Championships will show you how to use recruiters to your benefit, as one portion of a comprehensive job search process. It will also show you how to open up opportunities outside of recruiters that will allow you to move beyond the situation you are currently in and leverage your skills in new ways.

Papering the World with Résumés

The last element of the LIMP method is to “Paper the world with résumés in the hopes that one sticks and you get hired.”

There are a number of difficulties with this element.

First, if you are sending out résumés to anyone who may have a job, you are not focusing your efforts on companies and positions that suit you best, that will make best use of the skills you most like to employ, and that you are likely to enjoy working in. Again, your chances of getting your dream job are slim.

...if you are sending out résumés to anyone who may have a job, you are not focusing your efforts...

Second, in the interest of sending out as many résumés as possible in the shortest amount of time, typically the searcher sends exactly the same résumé and cover letter to every company on their list. Without any customization to these items based on the specific goals and needs of the organization to which you are applying, the result is a generic résumé, which, in turn, makes you seem generic.

Third, most searchers tend to use cover letters and résumés as “brain dumps” that merely present the standard chronological regurgitation of job tasks. Additionally, most searchers focus on “style over substance” when it comes to cover letters and résumés, believing that a slick presentation and the use of the latest trendy formats are the key to getting noticed.

The Career Game Championships will show you how to design your cover letters and résumés as *marketing instruments* designed to sell yourself to the organization while still gearing them towards the needs of the specific company. It will also show you how to supercharge the résumé that you submit so that it stands out from the rest and highlights your skills, experience, accomplishments and motivations rather than being a simple list of tasks performed in previous positions.

Indirect Drawbacks of the LIMP Method

There are a number of other drawbacks to relying solely on the LIMP method when performing a job or career search.

Ignoring Motivations

Using the LIMP method completely ignores your motivations. The key to a truly successful job or career change is that the resulting position allows you to employ the skills that you most enjoy using in your job. Keep in mind that the skills that most motivate you may not be the skills that you are currently using most often in your current job, and therefore may not be reflected in your list of accomplishments.

The Career Game Championships will help you identify your motivations and apply them to your job search.

Ignoring the Follow-Up

Quite possibly the biggest drawback of trying to perform a search using the LIMP method is that it is woefully incomplete. Look once again at the four major elements and you quickly realize that they may get you in the door, but no farther. They completely leave out interview, follow-up, and negotiation skills, which are by far the more important pieces of the puzzle.

The Career Game Championships will teach you important interviewing skills which will allow you to control the interview process, show you how to provide dynamic answers to tough interview questions, and show you how to recognize “hidden” questions lurking within seemingly innocent interview questions. It will show you how to follow up with the hiring organization after the interview is over. And it will also teach you important negotiating skills that can help you avoid leaving thousands on the table in salary, benefits, and perks—all in a calm, non-confrontational manner.

Ignoring Quality Assurance

This is an element that I find is missing from almost every job search. Usually when I ask if they've used any kind of quality assurance in their process all I get is a blank stare. People just don't consider it; some outright ignore it.

Since the typical methods revolve around getting you in the door, the only criterion that is typically used to measure success is the number of interviews that the searcher gets, and beyond that, the number of offers received. But if you look at the job search as an ongoing process, there is much more to it than that. The process *must* be managed.

Usually when I ask if they've used any kind of quality assurance in their process all I get is a blank stare.

The Career Game Championships will show you numerous benchmarks and measurable keys that you should implement and examine throughout your search campaign. It will show you how to recognize problems and make critical adjustments along the way.

In summary, the methods typically used by those seeking to change jobs or careers fall far short of a complete process designed to result in the job you've always wanted. The process that I'm about to show you, starting with the next chapter, addresses all of these shortfalls and provides what I believe to be the most complete job search process available. It's a process designed to take all of your motivations and skills into account, while providing you with all the tools you need to finally find the job in the "right" organization, that you truly enjoy, pays well, and is personally gratifying.

2



The Breakthrough: The **SOLID** Method

Everyone hopes for a job that pays well and is personally gratifying. Most people are looking for a job that they enjoy and that makes good use of their skills—not just any skills, but those that they particularly like to employ. You may be a great accountant, but if it doesn't motivate you—if you don't enjoy it—you aren't going to find an accounting job particularly gratifying.

As we discovered, the LIMP method does nothing to address your motivations. In fact, it puts you totally at the mercy of the job market; you find yourself in a position where you must shoehorn your skills into a predetermined job description. I find it very frustrating when people rely on the same old things, not realizing the drawbacks of the tasks they are performing, and not recognizing the critical tasks that they are leaving out. Most people, possibly yourself included, have gone through this LIMP routine time and time again because no one has ever told them that there might be a better way.

I'm here to tell you that there *is* a better way.

The Career Game Championships aims to change the way that you prepare for, execute, and complete a job or career search. This is a process that empowers individuals to be in control of their search and to implement a career plan with direction and goals, taking into account the things that motivate them, and using tools that assist them in achieving those goals in both the short and long run.

The combination of enjoyment and favored skills is different for everyone, and that's a good thing because it ensures that there are people to fill all of the different types of jobs out there. People are complex, and that makes the Career Game Championships complex. It also means that everybody's idea of the ideal job is different, and a "job in a box" is not likely to fulfill the criteria of your ideal job.

So if the LIMP method only gets you a job in a box, obviously a new method is needed. I have such a method and it can be learned and implemented by anyone. A method that, if followed correctly, can place the searcher in a position of strength so that they find themselves winning regularly at the Career Game Championships.

The SOLID Method

The key to a successful job or career search is that you take the best of “the old way” and add a number of concepts that will result in a comprehensive process. Much of what I’m going to teach you is common sense, but I find that very few people use these methods in their search.

Some of what I’m going to teach you may also require some changes to your mindset. But what you’ll find is that the method laid out here, in direct opposition to the method in the last section, is **SOLID**. This method emphasizes:

- **S**trategy—An approach combining marketing-oriented thinking, tools, and processes.
- **O**rganization—A complement of well thought-out and planned search activities with planned results.
- **L**ogic—A logical, common-sense approach tells you that if your current actions aren’t working, then you must adapt, adjust, and change.
- **I**nnovation—A commitment to learning new methods and techniques for marketing yourself that differentiates you from everyone else.
- **D**etermination—A demonstrated effort to combine and use all of the required search processes throughout your search—avoiding or leaving out any part at any time is a formula for failure.

In addition, once you’ve seen how my method works, I believe you will agree that it is both **U**ser-friendly and **R**ealistic. The final result? U R SOLID as opposed to LIMP.

Following this method will get you a much better job than you could have using other methods and one that is likely to be much more satisfying. It is also likely to get you a job in one-third to one-half the time it would take using more typical methods. It is also very likely that you won’t feel pressure to simply settle for the low-hanging fruit, because you’ll have more choices available to you. Many of my clients have found that they get a number of job offers almost simultaneously, giving them the ability to select the best option for themselves.

Direct Benefits of the SOLID Method

Just as there are drawbacks to the LIMP method, there are significant benefits to using the SOLID method.

The first is that it is unique, in two ways. The techniques described in these modules help you discover the unique combination of talent and motivation that leads to the discovery of your ideal job. I will show you how to implement a process that is much different than the typical job search, and show you methods that stand head and shoulders above the usual “process,” if you can even use that term to describe what most people do.

When you are finished, you will know how to present yourself as the unique candidate in the eyes of prospective employers, one that stands out from the pack. I’ll let you in on another secret: If you follow my method correctly *there will be no pack*. This method is so proactive, you will be making opportunities for yourself without facing much competition, because you will be making your mark before a job listing is even prepared.

This method is so proactive, you will be making opportunities for yourself without facing much competition...

Which brings me to the second benefit: you are in control. Instead of relying on posted job listings that force you to shoehorn your skills into the “job in a box,” — a job that is already defined with specific tasks and certain required skills and criteria—this method allows you to control the process, and the end result is often a job that is tailored to your skills and motivations. As I alluded to in the first section of this module, you have the opportunity to generate your own position, possibly one that the company had not considered before. So much better than the jobs in a box that are typically very confining and seldom represent positions that will utilize all the skills you would most enjoy.

So let’s look at the pieces of the SOLID method and investigate how they help you to be unique and bring a measure of control over the search process that you are likely to find is unprecedented in your career.

Strategy

The first element of the SOLID method is “Strategy.” A truly effective job search is not a series of unplanned coincidences and unconnected encounters. Rather, it must be well thought out—a strategic process that combines marketing-oriented thinking, tools, and processes.

Marketing-oriented thinking refers to the fact that your job search process is really no different from a business project that markets a product. That business project totally focuses on the different ways to make the consumer aware of the product by using a combined marketing plan to raise awareness of the product using many different methods.

In this case, the product is you and the consumer is the hiring organization.

If your job search is a loose, mostly coincidental string of occurrences, you are not likely to get “the win”—a new, personally rewarding job. However, if as I suggest, you treat the job change process as a business marketing project and manage it accordingly, you are much more likely to be successful.

Management of the process requires time and effort, but I believe that the time and effort is all worthwhile, and when you’ve completed the process and moved into a position that you truly enjoy, I think you’ll agree.

The Career Game Championships will show you how to put together a strategy for tackling the job search process. It will show you how to build a multi-faceted approach that will raise awareness of you and your skills. By using this strategic approach, prospective employers will take notice of you.

Organization

The second element of the SOLID method is “Organization.” A truly effective job search is not simply thrown together, but instead is a well-organized set of planned search activities that lead you towards your desired results. During the process, you will plan each week’s search activities, and know at that time what your expected outcome is.

By putting together an organized set of tasks that you can repeat on a scheduled basis, you not only have knowledge of the upcoming steps, but you can also better plan your tasks, responses, and alternatives.

The modules that make up the body of *The Career Game Championships* will show you how to organize your job search so that it is the most thorough, complete process you’ve ever used. The organized process of the Career Game Championships shows you how to set up a methodology to track your progress, ways to continually grow your network, and how to use control measures to always improve your activities.

“Yeah, but I Hate Marketing..”

Many people say and think this because they believe a search becomes about “selling” themselves, an act that is counter to much of our society.

When I use the language of “marketing,” my system is more about applying the tactical excellence—dotting the I’s and crossing the T’s—of an effective project management approach. When this is done, the marketing aspect will take care of itself quite well without having to compromise your work values or ethics.

Logic

The third element of the SOLID method is “Logic.” If the process you’re using doesn’t make sense to you, it’s not going to be very successful. I believe that the process described in these modules is extremely logical—it just makes sense. It has a flow. In fact, as we move through the process, you may find yourself saying to yourself, “That seems so obvious. Why didn’t I think of that before?”

Logic should also tell you that if your current methods are not working, then something must change. This applies not only to methods you have used in the past, but also to the tasks that you happen to be performing at any given time as you implement the processes described in *The Career Game Championships*. There will be things along the way that may require adjustments, adaptations, and changes throughout the process. My program will accommodate such requirements as they arise.

If the process you're using doesn't make sense to you, it's not going to be very successful.

The Career Game Championships will lead you through this logical, common-sense approach. As you move through the process, you will see that logical thinking continually leads you along the path towards a successful outcome. It will help you learn how to discover real answers to hard questions, provide a methodical approach, and point you toward the logical conclusion.

Innovation

The fourth element of the SOLID method is “Innovation.” This relates not only to my method itself, but also to your acceptance of it. I believe that this method is the most innovative way to conduct a job search that you will find. The richness of the method as well as its complete, thorough nature combine to form what for most people will be a completely new way of looking at the job search process.

In addition, you will be bringing innovation to your own search in the form of a commitment to learning new methods and techniques for marketing yourself. You will quickly see that these innovative methods and techniques are what are going to differentiate you from everyone else during your search.

I urge you to be innovative throughout the entire process. You will see that much of my method revolves around the concept of marketing yourself just as you would a business product. There are many ways to do this, and the more creative you are in finding ways to market yourself, the more flexible you are to find the methods that work best for you, the more successful your search will be.

The Career Game Championships will teach you an entirely new way to look at the job search process, teach you many new tasks and methods to use during the search, and teach you how to innovate during the process in the form of using new, inventive methods to market yourself.

Determination

The fifth element of the SOLID method is “Determination.” I can’t stress enough how important this element is to the process. No job search is easy, but I assure you that if you show your determination in following the techniques I’m describing to you, you *will* be successful. I also assure you that if you follow the methods I describe here closely, the length of your job search *will* be less than if you were relying on traditional methods. But in order to see the fruits of success, you must be determined to see it through.

...I assure you that if you show your determination in following the techniques I’m describing to you, you will be successful.

The Career Game Championships has much to show you. You are going to have to put forth a demonstrated effort to combine and use all of the tools and methods described in this book throughout your search. The process is designed specifically to be used as a complete, all-encompassing set of tasks, methods, and activities; avoiding or leaving out any part at any time is a formula for failure.

I do believe, however, that if you remain determined throughout the process and follow the process closely, that your determination will be rewarded. The payoff will be better than you imagined.