

# YOUR AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT

*Smart Tools.*


*Strategic Prompts.*

*Real Results.*

**AI is your co-pilot. You are the driver.**



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This guide is yours to keep. Use it every time you update your resume, optimize your LinkedIn, prepare for an interview, or launch your next career move. Your future starts with the very next step you take.

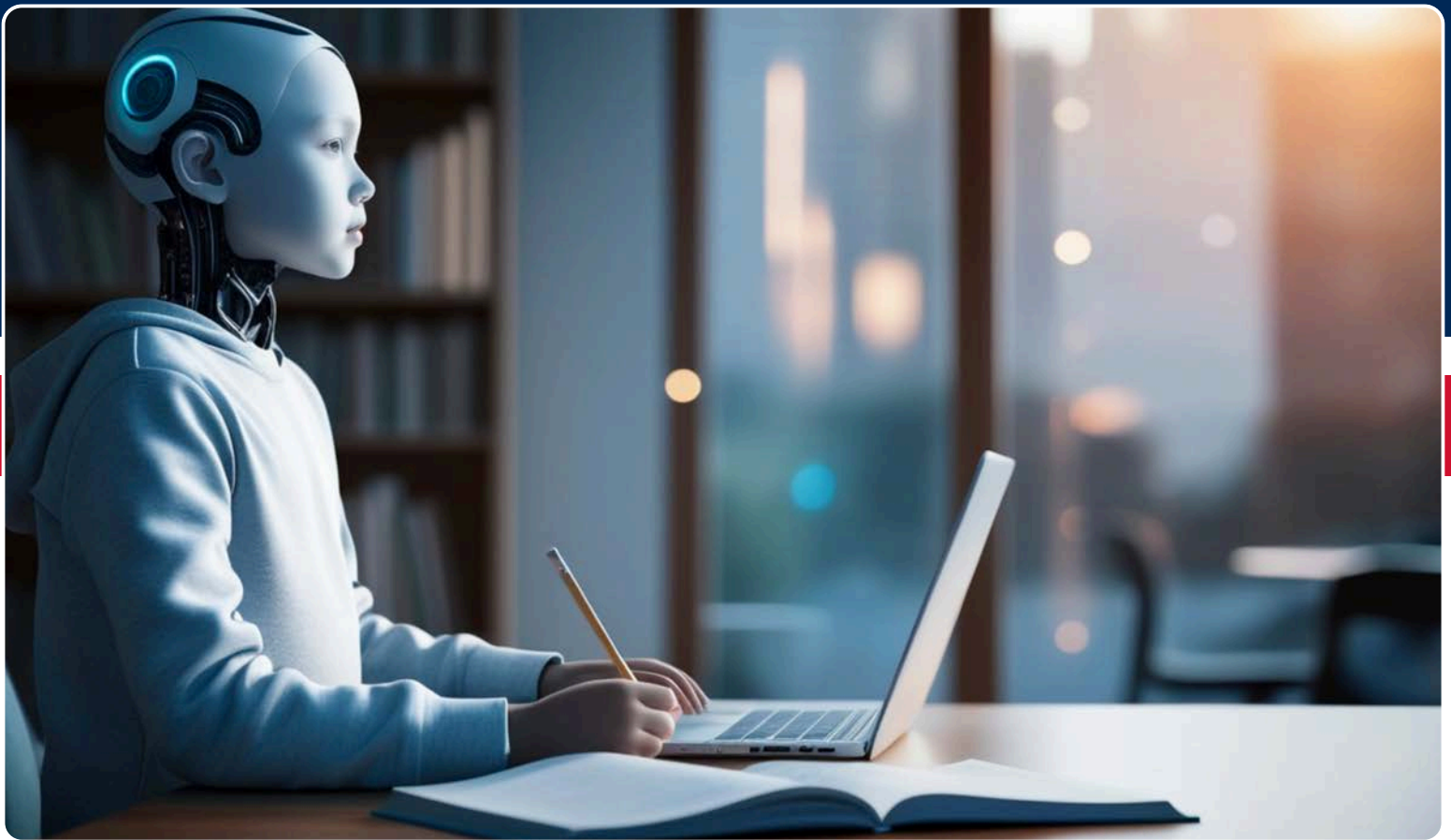
The content in this toolkit was developed by Megan O'Connor, SHRM-CP, CPRW, drawing on over 20+ years of HR and workforce development experience. Claude AI (Anthropic) was used as a collaborative tool throughout the development process assisting with content drafting, information structuring, visual design, and instructional sequencing. All content was reviewed, verified, and refined by the author. References are listed throughout this document and on page 94.

# QUICK REFERENCE: FIND WHAT YOU NEED

Flip to the page you need. Every section builds on the one before it, but you can jump in anywhere.

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is built around a simple truth: your resume, LinkedIn profile, cover letter, interview answers, job search strategy, and networking approach are not separate tasks. They are all connected. When you build one piece well, every other piece gets stronger.

Whether you are a first-year student exploring career paths, an adult learner returning to school, a graduate student preparing for advanced roles, or an alumnus ready for your next chapter, this guide meets you where you are.

Every section includes plain-language explanations of key concepts, step-by-step instructions, and ready-to-use AI co-pilot prompts you can copy and paste into tools like Claude AI, ChatGPT, or Microsoft Copilot. You will also find formatting guides, real examples, and a curated resource library from leading career development organizations.



**PRO TIP:** Bookmark this guide. Save it to your desktop. Come back to it before every application, every interview, and every networking conversation. Career readiness is not a one-time event. It is a practice.

# YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO ROADMAP: HOW EVERYTHING CONNECTS

Career readiness is not a checklist of disconnected tasks. Your resume, LinkedIn, interview answers, cover letters, job search strategy, and networking approach all flow from the same source: knowing who you are, what you offer, and where you want to go. This roadmap shows you how every piece connects and how AI tools help you build each one.

STAGE	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
<b>1. PERSONAL BRAND</b>	Who are you professionally? What do you stand for?	This becomes the lens for everything you create.
<b>2. UNIQUE VALUE</b>	What specific combination of skills and experiences makes you different?	Differentiates you from every other candidate with a similar degree.
<b>3. TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF</b>	Your brand + value = your elevator pitch, your opening interview answer, and your LinkedIn About section.	One story, told consistently across every platform.
<b>4. RESUME</b>	Written through the lens of your brand. Targeted to each role using keywords from the job description.	AI + Jobscan help you align to each ATS.
<b>5. COVER LETTER</b>	Connects your unique value to a specific employer's needs, culture, and mission.	AI helps you research the company and tailor every letter.
<b>6. CV</b>	An expanded academic record of your education, research, publications, and presentations.	Essential for graduate students and academic roles.
<b>7. LINKEDIN PROFILE</b>	Your digital brand. SEO-optimized to attract recruiters who search by keyword.	Recruiters search LinkedIn like Google. Your keywords matter.
<b>8. JOB SEARCH STRATEGY</b>	Boolean operators, Google Alerts, and targeted searches find roles aligned with your goals and values.	Search for employers that fit you, not just employers with openings.
<b>9. INTERVIEW PREP</b>	Brand story + CAR method answers + company research = confident, authentic responses.	NotebookLM creates custom audio prep. AI generates practice questions.
<b>10. NETWORKING</b>	Your brand tells people who you are. Your value proposition tells them why to remember you.	X-ray searches help you find the right people to connect with.



**PRO TIP:** Start at Stage 1. Every tool, prompt, and strategy in this guide connects back to your personal brand. If you skip that step, everything else is generic. If you nail it, everything else becomes magnetic.

YOUR AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT |  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

# 1

# PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS:  
WHAT YOU NEED  
TO KNOW



## What Is ATS (Applicant Tracking System)?

Before you open a single AI tool, you need to understand the systems that shape how employers find, filter, and evaluate candidates. These are not complicated, but they are powerful. Understanding them gives you a strategic advantage that most candidates never have.

### ATS: SOFTWARE THAT SCANS AND FILTERS RESUMES BEFORE A HUMAN EVER SEES THEM

Think of ATS like a giant filing cabinet with a built-in search engine. When candidates apply, the system parses each resume, pulling out details like job titles, skills, education, and work history, and stores that information in a searchable database. When a recruiter is ready to review applicants, they search that database using keywords from the job description, much like you would use Control+F to find a specific word in a document. If you've ever pressed Control+F and typed a word, you know that your computer doesn't delete anything. It simply highlights where that word appears so you can find it faster.

ATS works the same way, but on a massive scale. Resumes that contain the terms a recruiter searches for, such as specific job titles, technical skills, and certifications, surface in the results. Resumes that don't contain those terms aren't rejected or deleted. They simply don't appear in that particular search and may sit in the database unseen. Many applicant tracking systems include a built-in candidate ranking feature that scores and orders resumes based on keyword matches and other criteria before a recruiter ever opens a file. However, whether that ranking function is actively used depends on the individual recruiter, the organization's hiring practices, and how the system has been configured, which means you cannot assume every employer is relying on an automated score to make screening decisions.

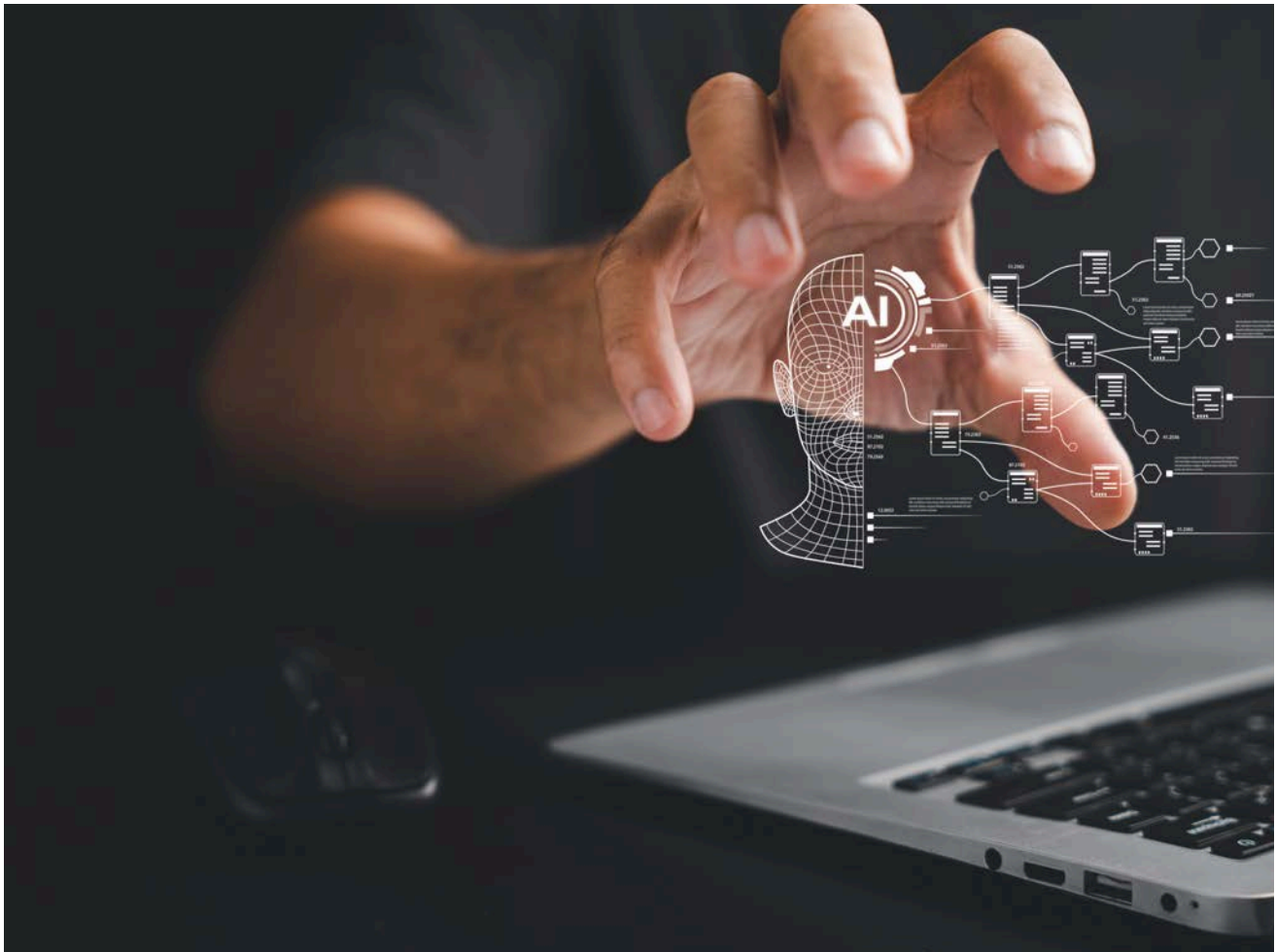
The system does not automatically eliminate resumes. It organizes them. The real challenge is volume. Popular job postings can attract hundreds or even thousands of applications, and no recruiter can realistically review every one. That is why tailoring your resume to mirror the language in each job description matters. It ensures your qualifications are visible when a recruiter searches for them. Later in this guide, you will work through a simulated exercise designed to illustrate how an ATS with a ranking feature might respond to your resume. Because ATS ranking logic is proprietary and varies by platform, that exercise is intentionally fictitious, but it will give you a practical frame of reference for understanding how these systems can shape visibility before a human ever sees your application.

## The Plain Text Test: Is Your Resume ATS-Friendly?

Here is a quick test you can do right now to check whether your resume will survive an ATS scan:

- ▶ Open your resume in Microsoft Word.
- ▶ Select all content (Control+A), then copy it (Control+C).
- ▶ Open Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit set to plain text (Mac).
- ▶ Paste your resume (Control+V).
- ▶ Review: Can you read everything? Is all your text there? Is it in the right order?

If text is missing, jumbled, or out of order, your resume has formatting elements that ATS cannot read. Text boxes, tables, columns, headers/footers, graphics, and images are the most common culprits. Fix your formatting before you submit another application.



## AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT— KNOW THE SYSTEM

# THE ATS SYSTEMS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER

Nearly 99 percent of Fortune 500 companies use an Applicant Tracking System, and 75 percent of all recruiters report using one. When you apply for a job online, your resume almost always passes through one of these systems before a human ever sees it. Here are the platforms you are most likely to encounter.

- Qu, L. (2025). 2025 applicant tracking system usage report. Jobscan. <https://www.jobscan.co/blog/fortune-500-use-applicant-tracking-systems/>
- HiringThing. (2024). 2024 applicant tracking system stats. <https://blog.hiringthing.com/2024-applicant-tracking-system-stats/>

## ATS Systems by Employer Type

The system you encounter depends on the size and type of employer. Knowing which ATS a company uses can help you understand how your application will be processed.

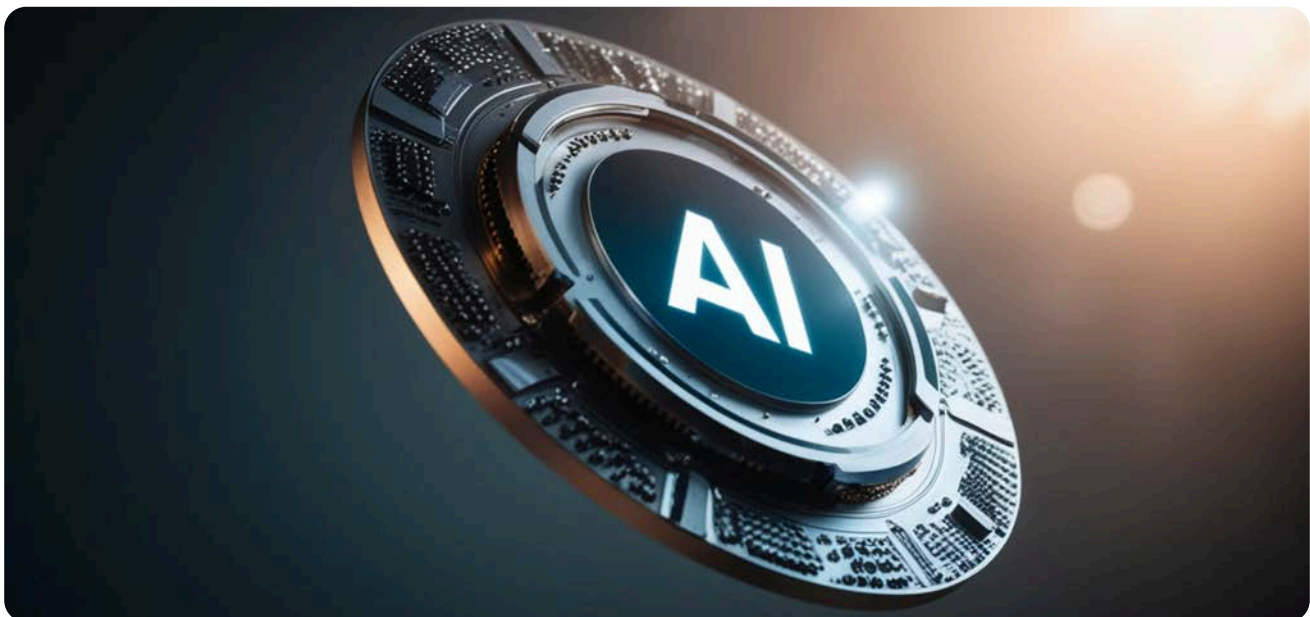
ATS Platform	Who Uses It	You'll See It	Example Employers
<b>Workday</b>	The dominant ATS for Fortune 500 and large enterprises. Over 39% of Fortune 500 companies use Workday for talent acquisition.	Very High	Amazon, Walmart, Target, Eli Lilly, Deloitte, PepsiCo
<b>Oracle Taleo</b>	Legacy enterprise system still widely deployed in large organizations, government, and higher education. Declining but still common.	Very High	FedEx, Starbucks, many state/federal agencies, universities
<b>SAP SuccessFactors</b>	Large global enterprises, especially in manufacturing, healthcare, and finance. 13% of Fortune 500.	High	Johnson & Johnson, Siemens, Bosch, Under Armour
<b>iCIMS</b>	Market leader by revenue. Popular across mid-size to large employers in healthcare, retail, hospitality, and financial services.	Very High	Southwest Airlines, UPS, Hallmark, Enterprise, CVS
<b>Greenhouse</b>	Fastest-growing ATS. Popular with tech companies, startups, and modern mid-size employers focused on structured hiring.	High	HubSpot, Airbnb, Cloudflare, Figma, Pinterest
<b>Lever</b>	Popular with fast-growing tech startups and mid-size companies. Combines ATS with candidate relationship management.	High	Netflix, Shopify, KPMG, many Series A–C startups
<b>SmartRecruiters</b>	Cloud-based ATS used by global enterprises. Strong in retail, hospitality, and consumer brands.	Moderate	IKEA, Visa, Equinox, Skechers, LinkedIn

<b>ADP Recruiting</b>	Companies already using ADP for payroll and HR often add the recruiting module. Common in mid-size businesses.	Moderate	Mid-size companies using ADP Workforce Now
<b>Jobvite</b>	Mid-market employer ATS with strong social recruiting features. Common in healthcare, education, and nonprofit sectors.	Moderate	Logitech, Schneider Electric, Hulu
<b>BambooHR</b>	Small to mid-size businesses (under 500 employees). Often the first ATS a growing company adopts.	Moderate	Smaller local and regional employers
<b>JazzHR</b>	Small businesses and startups. Budget-friendly with basic applicant tracking features.	Moderate	Small businesses, local employers, early-stage startups
<b>Workable</b>	Small to mid-size employers scaling quickly. Easy to set up with broad job board distribution.	Moderate	Growing SMBs, franchise operations

## HOW TO IDENTIFY WHICH ATS A COMPANY USES

When you click “Apply” on a company’s careers page, look at the URL in your browser. If it redirects to a domain like myworkdayjobs.com, icims.com, lever.co, or boards.greenhouse.io, that tells you exactly which ATS is processing your application. You can also paste the job URL into Jobscan, which will potentially identify the ATS automatically. Knowing the system helps you understand how your resume will be parsed and scored.

- <https://www.jobscan.co>



### ● ATS Dashboard — Riverstone Health Systems

Requisition: MKT-2026-041 | Position: Marketing Coordinator | Status: Active

Applications: 217 | Auto-screened: 217 | Advancing to review: 34 | Rejected: 162 | Hold: 21

#	Candidate	Score	Status	Hard Skills	Soft Skills	Edu	Exp	Certs	Resume Format
1	Archie Eagle	92%	ADVANCE	13/14	4/4	✓	✓	2/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
2	Jordan M.	89%	ADVANCE	12/14	4/4	✓	✓	1/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
3	Taylor K.	83%	ADVANCE	11/14	3/4	✓	✓	2/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
4	Priya S.	78%	ADVANCE	11/14	3/4	✓	✓	1/2	.pdf, 1 col, parseable
5	Marcus D.	71%	ADVANCE	10/14	3/4	✓	✓	0/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
6	Leah R.	67%	HOLD	9/14	3/4	✓	✓	0/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
7	Sam W.	54%	HOLD	7/14	2/4	✓	✓	1/2	.pdf, 2 col, text boxes
8	Dakota F.	51%	HOLD	8/14	2/4	✓	✗	0/2	.docx, 1 col, std headings
9	Mia T.	43%	REJECTED	5/14	2/4	✓	✓	0/2	.pdf, graphic design layout
10	Chris L.	38%	REJECTED	4/14	1/4	✓	✗	0/2	.pdf, infographic style
11	Blake N.	31%	REJECTED	6/14	1/4	✗	✓	0/2	.pdf, 2 col, icons/graphics
12	Avery H.	22%	REJECTED	2/14	0/4	✓	✓	0/2	Image-based .pdf, unparseable

✓ **ADVANCE** = 70%+ match. Recruiter will review.

— **HOLD** = 50–69%. Reviewed only if pool is thin.

✗ **REJECTED** = Below 50%. Never seen by a human.

## What to Notice in This Queue

**217 people applied. The ATS ranked all 217 by match score. Only the top 34 scored high enough to appear at the top of the recruiter's queue.** The ATS did not reject anyone. But when a recruiter has 217 resumes and limited time, they start at the top and work down. Candidates ranked below the threshold are unlikely to be reviewed - not because they were rejected, but because the recruiter never got to them.

- **Archie Eagle (Candidate 1)** scores 92 percent because he uses an ATS-friendly .docx format, standard section headings, matches 13 of 14 hard skills, all 4 soft skills, and holds both preferred certifications. This is the sample resume from your toolkit in action.
- **Sam W. (Candidate 7)** has real qualifications but lands in HOLD at 54 percent. A two-column PDF with text boxes prevented the ATS from reading 3 of her skills. She also used different terminology than the job description (“social media management” instead of “social media strategies”). Same skills, different words, lower score.
- **Avery H. (Candidate 12)** scores 22 percent despite potentially being qualified. An image-based PDF (designed in Canva as a graphic) was almost entirely unparseable. The ATS could only extract a name and email. Every skill, every degree, every job title — invisible to the ranking system. Avery may be fully qualified, but the recruiter will never know.
- **Blake N. (Candidate 11)** matched 6 of 14 hard skills but is ranked near the bottom because the system could not identify a bachelor's degree. The education section was inside a sidebar graphic the ATS could not read. A recruiter scrolling through 217 applicants is unlikely to reach candidate 11.

### THE PATTERN

Every candidate at the top of the queue has three things in common: an ATS-readable format (.docx, single column, standard headings), keyword language that mirrors the job description, and skills demonstrated in context rather than just listed. Every candidate ranked at the bottom is missing at least one of those three. The ATS does not reject you. It ranks you. But a low ranking means the recruiter is unlikely to ever open your resume. Your job is to make sure your document represents your talent accurately — because the ranking is based on the document, not on you.

*This is a simplified, educational simulation. Real ATS dashboards vary by vendor, and scoring logic is proprietary. In most systems, the ATS ranks and sorts candidates but does not make hiring decisions.*

*Recruiters review candidates starting from the top of the ranked queue, which means low-scoring resumes are rarely seen — not formally rejected, but effectively invisible.*

Now you know what the system is looking for. The next section shows you exactly how to deliver it. Every formatting rule that follows, from paragraph spacing to section headings to file type, exists for one reason: to make sure the ATS can read your resume accurately so your qualifications reach the recruiter at the top of the queue.

## ATS-Friendly Resume Formatting Best Practices

ELEMENT	BEST PRACTICE
File Format	Save as .docx (preferred by most ATS). Use PDF only if the employer specifically requests it.
Font Type	Use standard, professional fonts: Arial, Calibri, Garamond, Cambria, or Times New Roman. Avoid decorative or script fonts.
Font Size	Name: 14 to 16pt. Section headings: 12 to 14pt bold. Body text: 10.5 to 12pt. Do not go below 10pt.
Margins	0.5 to 1 inch on all sides. Narrower margins (0.5 inch) give you more space; wider margins (1 inch) look cleaner. Never go below 0.5 inch.
Spacing	Single spacing within sections. Add 6 to 10pt of space between sections. Use consistent spacing throughout.
Section Headings	Use standard labels: "Experience," "Education," "Skills," "Certifications." Creative headings confuse ATS parsers.
Layout	Single column only. No text boxes, tables, columns, graphics, or images in the body of the resume. Keep all critical content in the main text flow.
Headers/Footers	Do not place your name, contact information, or any important content in the header or footer. Most ATS cannot read these areas.
Acronyms	Write the full term first, then the acronym in parentheses: "Search Engine Optimization (SEO)." This ensures ATS catches both versions.
Bullet Points	Use standard round bullets. Avoid arrows, diamonds, checkmarks, or custom symbols that may not render in ATS.

## Advanced Microsoft Word Formatting Guide for Resumes

White space is your secret weapon. A resume crammed edge to edge with text signals disorganization. Strategic white space guides the reader's eye, creates visual hierarchy, and makes your strongest qualifications stand out. Here is how to master it in Microsoft Word:

### Paragraph Spacing (The #1 White Space Tool)

- ▶ Go to Home > Paragraph > Line Spacing Options (or right-click > Paragraph).
- ▶ Set "Line spacing" to Single or Exactly 12 to 14pt for body text.
- ▶ Set "Before" to 0pt and "After" to 3 to 6pt for bullet points.
- ▶ Set "Before" to 6 to 10pt and "After" to 3pt for section headings. This creates separation between sections without wasting full blank lines.
- ▶ Never use the Enter key to create blank lines. Always use paragraph spacing. This gives you precise control.

### Tab Stops (Align Dates and Locations Professionally)

- ▶ Place your cursor on the line with your job title and company.
- ▶ Go to Home > Paragraph > Tabs (or double-click the ruler).
- ▶ Set a Right tab stop at 6.5 inches (for 1-inch margins) or at your right margin.
- ▶ Press Tab, then type your date. The date will align perfectly to the right margin.
- ▶ This eliminates the messy look of spaces or multiple tabs and keeps your resume clean.

### Styles for Consistency

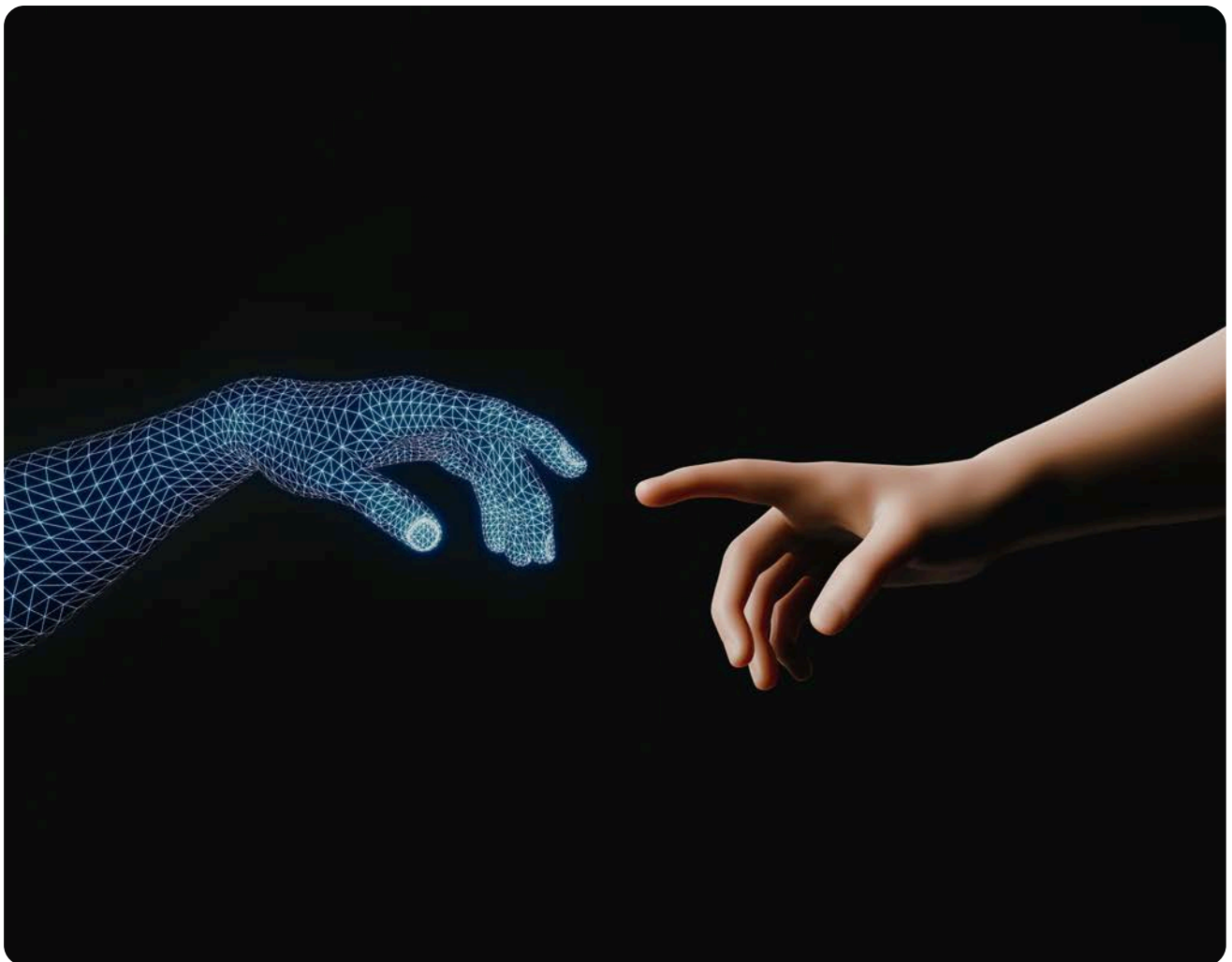
- ▶ Use Word's built-in Styles (Home > Styles) to format your headings, subheadings, and body text.
- ▶ Modify a Style: right-click the style name > Modify > change font, size, and spacing.
- ▶ Once set, applying a style to any text ensures consistent formatting throughout your document.
- ▶ Styles also make global changes instant. Update the style once and every heading updates.

## Section Breaks and Horizontal Lines

- ▶ To add a thin line between sections: Place your cursor, go to Home > Borders > Bottom Border. This creates a subtle separator.
- ▶ Adjust line weight and color: Format > Borders and Shading > select 0.5pt or 0.75pt in a neutral gray.
- ▶ Avoid heavy borders, double lines, or full-box borders around sections.



**PRO TIP:** The goal of white space is not to fill a page. It is to make the most important information easy to find in a 6 to 10 second scan, which is the average time a recruiter spends on a first-pass resume review.



## What Is an Algorithm?

### ALGORITHM: A SET OF RULES A COMPUTER FOLLOWS TO MAKE DECISIONS

Think of an algorithm as a recipe. When you search for something on Google, an algorithm decides which results to show you first. When you scroll LinkedIn, an algorithm decides which posts appear in your feed. When a recruiter searches a database for candidates, an algorithm decides whose profile shows up at the top. Algorithms are everywhere in your job search. Understanding them means you can work with them instead of against them.

In your career, algorithms affect three critical systems:

- ▶ Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) use algorithms to scan, filter, and rank resumes based on keyword matches.
- ▶ LinkedIn's algorithm decides which profiles appear in recruiter searches and which posts show up in feeds.
- ▶ Job board algorithms (Indeed, Handshake, Glassdoor) determine which postings you see and which candidates employers see first.



**The good news:** you do not need to be a programmer to use algorithms to your advantage. You just need to understand what they are looking for and give it to them. Let's take a look at how ATS uses algorithms to parse candidate applications for a fictitious Marketing Coordinator role at Riverstone Health Systems.



# Marketing Coordinator

Riverstone Health Systems • Evansville, IN • Full-Time

★ SAMPLE JOB POSTING

## ABOUT THE ROLE

Riverstone Health Systems is seeking a Marketing Coordinator to join our growing marketing team. This role supports the Director of Marketing in executing digital marketing campaigns, content creation, and brand strategy across our healthcare network. The ideal candidate is a self-starter who thrives in a fast-paced, collaborative environment and is passionate about using data-driven insights to tell compelling stories.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop and execute social media strategies across LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and X to increase patient engagement and brand awareness.
- Create, edit, and publish content including blog posts, newsletters, press releases, and email marketing campaigns using Mailchimp and HubSpot.
- Track and analyze campaign performance metrics using Google Analytics, create monthly reports, and present data-driven recommendations to cross-functional stakeholders.
- Coordinate with external vendors, agencies, and internal departments to ensure brand consistency across all marketing collateral.
- Support SEO and SEM initiatives including keyword research, on-page optimization, and paid search campaigns.
- Assist with event planning and coordination for community health fairs, open houses, and provider recruitment events.
- Use AI tools such as ChatGPT and Canva AI to support content ideation, first-draft creation, and visual asset development while maintaining brand voice and editorial standards.

## REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Communications, Public Relations, or related field.
- 1–3 years of experience in marketing, communications, or digital media (internships count).
- Proficiency in Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator), Canva, and Microsoft Office 365.
- Experience with CMS platforms (WordPress preferred) and basic HTML/CSS.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills with attention to detail and the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and collaborate across teams.

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Google Analytics Certification or HubSpot Content Marketing Certification.
- Hootsuite Social Marketing Certification or equivalent social media management credentials.
- Experience in healthcare marketing or a regulated industry.
- Familiarity with AI-powered marketing tools and a willingness to learn emerging technologies.
- APR (Accredited in Public Relations) credential is a plus.

## WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We value team members who bring creative problem-solving, adaptability, and a growth mindset to their work. You should be comfortable with giving and receiving feedback, taking ownership of projects, and communicating proactively with cross-functional teams. We are looking for someone who can balance strategic thinking with hands-on execution.

*This is a fictional job description created for educational purposes.*





## AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT— BEHIND THE CURTAIN

# INSIDE THE ATS: WHAT THE ALGORITHM ACTUALLY DOES

This is a simplified version of the code that decides whether a recruiter ever sees your resume. You do not need to understand programming to understand what is happening here. Read the code, then read the explanation below it.

## Step 1: The Algorithm Reads the Job Description

Before your resume is ever opened, the ATS extracts every required keyword from the job posting and builds a checklist. Here is what that looks like for the Marketing Coordinator role at Riverstone Health Systems:

### # ATS System: Extract required keywords from job description

```
job_title = "Marketing Coordinator"
company = "Riverstone Health Systems"

required_hard_skills = [
    "digital marketing", "social media strategies", "content creation",
    "email marketing", "Google Analytics", "SEO", "SEM",
    "HubSpot", "Mailchimp", "Adobe Creative Suite",
    "CMS", "HTML", "data-driven", "event planning", "AI tools"
]

required_soft_skills = [
    "collaboration", "communication", "project management", "adaptability"
]

preferred_certifications = [
    "Google Analytics Certification", "HubSpot Certification"
]

minimum_education = "bachelor's degree"
minimum_experience_years = 1
```

### → WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The algorithm already knows what it is looking for before it reads a single resume. If your resume does not contain these exact terms — or close variations — the system has nothing to match against. This is why mirroring the language in the job description matters.

## Step 2: The Algorithm Reads Your Resume

When you upload your resume, the ATS converts it to plain text and scans it for structure. Formatting errors, unusual fonts, tables, text boxes, and graphics can break this step. Here is the parsing logic:

```
def parse_resume(uploaded_file):
```

```
# Step 2a: Convert to plain text
```

```
raw_text = extract_text(uploaded_file)
```

```
# Step 2b: Check if the system can read it
```

```
if raw_text is empty or contains unreadable characters:  
    status = "REJECTED — file could not be parsed"  
    return None # ← Resume is never seen by a human
```

```
# Step 2c: Look for standard sections
```

```
sections = identify_sections(raw_text)  
# Looks for: "Experience", "Education", "Skills", "Certifications"  
# Creative headers like "My Journey" or "What I Bring" = not recognized
```

```
# Step 2d: Extract contact info, dates, job titles
```

```
candidate = {  
    "name": extract_name(raw_text),  
    "email": extract_email(raw_text),  
    "education": extract_degrees(sections),  
    "experience": calculate_years(sections),  
    "skills": extract_all_keywords(raw_text)  
}  
return candidate
```

### → WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If the ATS cannot convert your resume to clean text, it is rejected before scoring even begins. This is why the plain text test from Part One of this toolkit matters. Tables, columns, text boxes, headers and footers, graphics, and unusual fonts can all cause parsing failures. Use standard section headings: Experience, Education, Skills, Certifications. The algorithm is looking for those exact words.

## Step 3: The Algorithm Scores You

This is where your match rate is calculated. The algorithm compares every keyword it extracted from the job description against every keyword it found in your resume. Keywords found in your Experience section are weighted more heavily than keywords in a Skills list.

```
def score_candidate(candidate, job_requirements):
```

```
    score = 0
```

```
    max_possible = 100
```

```
    # --- HARD SKILLS (worth 50 points) ---
```

```
    for skill in required_hard_skills:
```

```
        if skill found in candidate["skills"]:
```

```
            if skill appears in Experience section:
```

```
                score += 4 # Full credit — shown in context
```

```
            else:
```

```
                score += 2 # Partial credit — listed but not demonstrated
```

```
    # --- SOFT SKILLS (worth 15 points) ---
```

```
    for skill in required_soft_skills:
```

```
        if skill found in candidate["skills"]:
```

```
            score += 3.75
```

```
    # --- EDUCATION (worth 15 points) ---
```

```
    if candidate["education"] >= minimum_education:
```

```
        score += 15
```

```
    # --- EXPERIENCE (worth 10 points) ---
```

```
    if candidate["experience"] >= minimum_experience_years:
```

```
        score += 10
```

```
    # --- CERTIFICATIONS (worth 10 bonus points) ---
```

```
    for cert in preferred_certifications:
```

```
        if cert found in candidate["skills"]:
```

```
            score += 5
```

```
    match_rate = score / max_possible * 100
```

# --- THE DECISION ---

```
if match_rate >= 70:  
return "ADVANCE TO RECRUITER REVIEW" # ✓ Human sees your resume  
elif match_rate >= 50:  
return "HOLD — review if pool is thin" # — Maybe  
else:  
return "REJECTED — below threshold" # ✗ Never seen
```

## → WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The 70 percent threshold is real. Most ATS systems require a match rate between 65 and 80 percent before a resume advances to human review. This is why Jobscan and similar tools recommend a 70 percent or higher match score. Every missing keyword lowers your score. Keywords mentioned in your Experience bullets are worth more than keywords in a Skills list alone, because context proves you have actually used the skill.



## Step 4: Two Candidates, One Job — The Algorithm Decides

Here is what happens when two equally qualified candidates apply for the same Marketing Coordinator position, but one has optimized their resume for ATS and the other has not:

	Candidate A: Optimized	Candidate B: Not Optimized
<b>Resume Format</b>	.docx, single column, standard headings, Calibri 11pt, no graphics	.pdf with two-column layout, text boxes, custom icons, decorative header
<b>Parsing Result</b>	✓ Fully parsed. All sections identified.	✗ Partial parse. Skills section inside text box was invisible to ATS.
<b>Hard Skills Found</b>	12 of 14 required skills found in Experience bullets with context	9 of 14 skills. 3 were in the text box the ATS could not read. 2 used different terminology.
<b>Soft Skills Found</b>	4 of 4 — woven into accomplishment statements	2 of 4 — listed but not demonstrated in context
<b>Education</b>	✓ Bachelor's in Marketing identified	✓ Bachelor's in Communications identified
<b>Experience</b>	✓ 2 years matched from date parsing	✓ 2 years matched from date parsing
<b>Certifications</b>	Google Analytics Cert found (+5 bonus)	Has the certification but listed it in footer — not parsed
<b>Match Score</b>	89%	54%
<b>ATS Decision</b>	✓ <b>ADVANCE TO RECRUITER</b>	✗ <b>HOLD — may never be seen</b>

### → WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Candidate B is not less qualified. She has the same degree, the same experience, and the same certification. She loses because her resume format prevented the algorithm from reading her skills, and the keywords she used did not match the exact terminology in the job description. The algorithm does not interpret. It matches. Your job is to make matching easy.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

An ATS is not evaluating whether you are good at your job. It is evaluating whether your document contains the right words in the right format. That is a different problem, and it has a different solution.

**The solution is everything in this toolkit:** ATS-friendly formatting from Part One, exact keyword matching from your job description research, the plain text test, and the 70 percent match rate target from Jobscan. These are not tips. They are the rules of the system your resume has to pass through.

**Now you have seen the code. You know what the machine is looking for, and that your recruiter is likely 'searching' for. Make it easy to find you.**

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Run Your Own ATS Simulation

Act as an Applicant Tracking System. Here is a job description: [paste full JD]. Here is my resume: [paste full resume text]. Score my resume the way an ATS would. For each required skill, qualification, and keyword in the job description, tell me whether it appears on my resume, where it appears, and whether it is demonstrated in context or just listed. Calculate my overall match percentage. Then give me a prioritized list of the top 10 changes I should make to increase my score above 70 percent.

This is a simplified, educational model. Real ATS systems like Taleo, Workday, iCIMS, and Greenhouse each use proprietary scoring logic with different weights and thresholds. The principles shown here — keyword matching, format parsing, and match-rate thresholds — are consistent across systems even though the exact numbers vary.

## What Is SEO (Search Engine Optimization)?

### SEO: THE PRACTICE OF USING STRATEGIC KEYWORDS SO YOU SHOW UP IN SEARCH RESULTS

SEO is how websites get found on Google. It is also how your LinkedIn profile gets found by recruiters. When a recruiter types "marketing intern Evansville" into LinkedIn's search bar, the algorithm scans profiles for those exact words. If those words appear in your headline, About section, or experience descriptions, you show up. If they do not, you are invisible, no matter how qualified you are.

LinkedIn reports that profiles with complete, keyword-rich content are significantly more likely to receive recruiter outreach. SEO is not about stuffing your profile with random buzzwords. It is about strategically placing the terms recruiters actually search for in the right sections of your profile.

### How to Identify Your SEO Keywords Using Job Descriptions

Here is one of the most powerful strategies in this entire guide: collect 6 to 10 job descriptions for positions you actually want to apply for. Paste them into an AI co-pilot and ask it to identify the most frequently repeated skills, qualifications, and phrases across all of them. Those recurring terms are your SEO keywords. They belong in your LinkedIn headline, About section, Skills section, and experience descriptions. This same exercise does double duty beyond LinkedIn. The language patterns you identify become the foundation for your resume and CV, your cover letter, and your personal brand statement. When you can speak the industry's own language back to it, you signal immediately that you understand the field, not just that you want a job in it.

To see exactly what this looks like in practice, refer to the "Decode the Job Description" visual on page 28 of this guide, which color-codes every keyword category in a real job posting and shows you precisely where each type belongs on your LinkedIn profile.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Identify Your SEO Keywords from Job Descriptions

I have collected [6/8/10] job descriptions for roles I want to apply for. Here they are: [paste all job descriptions]. Analyze all of them together and identify: (1) The top 15 keywords and phrases that appear most frequently across multiple descriptions, (2) The hard skills that are mentioned most often, (3) The soft skills and competencies that repeat, (4) Any tools, software, or certifications that are commonly required. Rank them by frequency. These are the SEO keywords I should integrate into my LinkedIn profile, resume, and cover letters.



**PRO TIP:** This strategy works because you are not guessing what recruiters search for. You are using real data from real job postings to reverse-engineer the exact language the market values. That is how you optimize with intention.

## AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT— VISUAL GUIDE

# DECODE THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Every highlighted term below is a keyword that should appear on your LinkedIn profile. These are the words recruiters search and ATS systems scan for.

### KEYWORD CATEGORIES

- **Hard Skills & Tools** ● **Soft Skills & Competencies** ● **Job Titles & Role Keywords**
- **Industry & Domain** ● **Certifications**

### KEYWORD CATEGORIES

#### **Marketing Coordinator**

Riverstone Health Systems • Evansville, IN • Full-Time

★ **SAMPLE JOB POSTING**

### ABOUT THE ROLE

Riverstone Health Systems is seeking a **Marketing Coordinator** to join our growing **marketing** team. This role supports the **Director of Marketing** in executing **digital marketing campaigns**, **content creation**, and **brand strategy** across our **healthcare** network. The ideal candidate is a **self-starter** who thrives in a **fast-paced, collaborative environment** and is passionate about using **data-driven insights** to tell compelling stories.

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- ▶ Develop and execute **social media strategies** across LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and X to increase **patient engagement** and **brand awareness**.
- ▶ Create, edit, and publish **content** including blog posts, newsletters, press releases, and **email marketing campaigns** using **Mailchimp** and **HubSpot**.
- ▶ Track and analyze **campaign performance metrics** using **Google Analytics**, create monthly reports, and present **data-driven recommendations** to **cross-functional stakeholders**.

- ▶ Coordinate with external vendors, **agencies**, and internal departments to ensure **brand consistency** across all **marketing collateral**.
- ▶ Support **SEO** and **SEM** initiatives including **keyword research**, on-page optimization, and paid search campaigns.
- ▶ Assist with **event planning** and coordination for community health fairs, open houses, and **provider recruitment** events.
- ▶ Use **AI tools** such as ChatGPT and Canva AI to support content ideation, first-draft creation, and visual asset development while maintaining **brand voice** and editorial standards.

## REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ Bachelor's degree in **Marketing, Communications, Public Relations**, or related field.
- ▶ 1–3 years of experience in **marketing, communications**, or **digital media** (internships count).
- ▶ Proficiency in **Adobe Creative Suite** (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator), **Canva**, and **Microsoft Office 365**.
- ▶ Experience with **CMS platforms** (WordPress preferred) and basic **HTML/CSS**.
- ▶ Strong **written and verbal communication skills** with attention to detail and the ability to manage **multiple projects simultaneously**.
- ▶ Demonstrated ability to **work independently** and **collaborate across teams**.

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ **Google Analytics Certification** or **HubSpot Content Marketing Certification**.
- ▶ **Hootsuite Social Marketing Certification** or equivalent **social media management** credentials.
- ▶ Experience in **healthcare marketing** or a regulated industry.
- ▶ Familiarity with **AI-powered marketing tools** and a willingness to learn emerging technologies.
- ▶ **APR (Accredited in Public Relations)** credential is a plus.

## WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We value team members who bring **creative problem-solving**, **adaptability**, and a growth mindset to their work. You should be comfortable with **giving and receiving feedback**, taking ownership of projects, and communicating proactively with **cross-functional teams**. We are looking for someone who can balance strategic thinking with hands-on execution.

## YOUR LINKEDIN SEO STRATEGY

### The 6-to-10 Rule

Find 6 to 10 job descriptions for roles you want. Highlight every keyword that appears in at least 3 of them. Those repeated terms are the SEO keywords that belong on your LinkedIn profile — in your headline, About section, and Experience descriptions.

### Where Keywords Go on LinkedIn

**Headline:** Job title + 2–3 top skills.

**About:** Weave keywords into your story naturally.

**Experience:** Mirror the language employers use.

**Skills:** Add all matching hard skills.

**Certifications:** List every one you hold.



### PRO TIP

If a keyword appears in the job description but not on your LinkedIn profile, recruiters searching for that term will never find you. LinkedIn's algorithm matches profiles to searches based on keyword frequency and placement — the same way Google matches web pages to search queries. Your profile is only as discoverable as the keywords on it.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Extract SEO Keywords from Job Descriptions

Here are [number] job descriptions for [job title] roles I am interested in: [paste all]. Analyze these descriptions and identify every keyword that appears in at least 3 of them. Organize the keywords into five categories: Hard Skills and Tools, Soft Skills and Competencies, Job Titles and Role Keywords, Industry and Domain Terms, and Certifications and Credentials. Then tell me which of these keywords are missing from my current LinkedIn profile: [paste your LinkedIn About section and headline]. Suggest specific edits to my headline, About section, and Experience bullets to incorporate the top 15 missing keywords naturally.

*This is a fictional job description created for educational purposes.*

## What Are Boolean Operators?

### BOOLEAN OPERATORS: SPECIAL WORDS AND SYMBOLS THAT REFINE SEARCH RESULTS

Boolean operators are the search language that powers Google, LinkedIn, Indeed, and every recruiter database. Learning them turns you from a passive job browser into a strategic job hunter. Recruiters use Boolean operators every single day to search their ATS and LinkedIn Recruiter tools for candidates with specific skills. When you understand how they search, you can make sure your resume and profile contain the terms they are looking for. And when you learn to use Boolean operators yourself, you gain the ability to build laser-focused job searches that surface more relevant opportunities, cut through noise, and put you in front of roles that are actually worth your time to pursue.

OPERATOR	EXAMPLE	WHAT IT DOES
AND	finance AND internship	Returns results containing BOTH terms
OR	marketing OR advertising	Returns results containing EITHER term
" "	"project manager"	Returns the exact phrase only
NOT / -	engineer -software	Excludes results with that term
( )	(marketing OR sales) AND intern	Groups terms for complex searches
site:	site:linkedin.com/in "data analyst"	Searches only within a specific website

### How Recruiters Use Boolean to Find YOU

Here is what a recruiter's search might look like in their ATS or LinkedIn Recruiter tool:

- "registered nurse" AND "ICU" AND "BSN" AND Indiana
- "software engineer" AND (Python OR Java) AND "entry level"
- "marketing" AND ("social media" OR "content strategy") AND Evansville

When your resume and LinkedIn profile contain these exact terms, you appear in their results. When you use different phrasing, such as "social media strategy" instead of "social media" and "content strategy" as separate terms, you may not. This is why mirroring the language from job descriptions matters so much.

You can apply this same logic to your own search. Using Boolean operators directly in Google, LinkedIn, or Indeed lets you filter results with the same precision a recruiter uses, combining role titles, locations, skills, and keywords so the opportunities you find are targeted rather than accidental.

We will go deeper on this as you develop your job search strategy later in this guide.

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# PART TWO

## YOUR AI TOOLKIT



TOOL	WHAT IT DOES	WHY IT MATTERS
<b>Claude AI</b> claude.ai	Resume and cover letter drafting, LinkedIn optimization, STAR/CAR story brainstorming, job search roadmaps, career exploration, skill gap analysis	Your all-purpose career co-pilot. Excellent for long-form content, nuanced strategy, and detailed feedback.
<b>ChatGPT</b> chat.openai.com	Resume bullet refinement, interview question practice, company research, brainstorming	Strong alternative for quick brainstorming and conversational practice.
<b>Microsoft Copilot</b> copilot.microsoft.com	Document editing, email drafting, research, presentations, resume formatting in Word	Free with your USI Microsoft 365 account. Integrates with Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook.
<b>Jobscan</b> jobscan.co	ATS resume optimization. Compares your resume against a specific job description and shows your keyword match rate.	Aim for 70%+ match rate before submitting. Free tier gives limited scans per month.
<b>Google NotebookLM</b> notebooklm.google.com	Upload your resume + job description + company research. Generates a custom AI audio discussion to walk you through interview prep.	Hearing your qualifications discussed back to you builds confidence and reveals insights.
<b>Google Alerts</b> google.com/alerts	Automated email notifications when new content matches your search terms.	Set alerts for target companies and job titles. Opportunities come to your inbox.
<b>O*NET OnLine</b> onetonline.org	Career exploration, salary data, job outlook, skills requirements by occupation.	Research what skills employers actually want before writing your resume.
<b>Canva</b> canva.com	LinkedIn banners, portfolio materials, professional branding, infographics.	Create a LinkedIn banner that reflects your career goals and personal brand.

# HOW TO WRITE HIGH-IMPACT AI PROMPTS

The quality of what AI gives you depends entirely on the quality of what you ask. A vague prompt produces a vague result. A specific, well-structured prompt produces content that is targeted, relevant, and ready to refine. Here is the framework:

## The 5-Part Prompt Formula

- ▶ **ROLE:** Tell the AI who to be. "Act as a career coach specializing in entry-level marketing roles."
- ▶ **CONTEXT:** Give background. "I am a junior at USI majoring in Communications with a minor in Business."
- ▶ **TASK:** Be specific about what you want. "Write 3 resume bullet points for my social media coordinator internship."
- ▶ **FORMAT:** Tell it how to deliver. "Use the CAR method (Challenge, Action, Result). Keep each bullet under 2 lines."
- ▶ **CONSTRAINTS:** Set boundaries. "Use language from this job description: [paste]. Do not fabricate any experience I did not have."

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Example: High-Impact Prompt in Action

Act as a career coach specializing in healthcare administration. I am a senior at USI majoring in Health Services with a minor in Business Administration. I completed a practicum at Deaconess Hospital where I helped streamline patient intake processes. Write 3 resume bullet points for this experience using the CAR method (Challenge, Action, Result). Include keywords from this job description: [paste JD]. Keep each bullet under 2 lines and start with a strong action verb.

## Prompts That Get Weak Results vs. Strong Results

WEAK PROMPT	STRONG PROMPT
"Write me a resume."	"Rewrite my experience section using CAR method bullets that align with this job description: [paste]."
"Help with my LinkedIn."	"Optimize my LinkedIn About section for SEO using these keywords from 8 job descriptions I collected: [paste keywords]."
"Give me interview questions."	"Generate 10 behavioral interview questions a hiring manager for [role] at [company] would ask, based on this job description: [paste]."
"Write a cover letter."	"Write a cover letter connecting my practicum experience at [org] to [company]'s mission of [specific mission]. Reference their recent [initiative]. Tone: confident but humble."



**PRO TIP:** Always paste the actual job description into your prompt. The more real-world data you give AI, the more targeted and useful the output becomes. AI works best when it has something specific to work with.



# ETHICAL AI USE:

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS THE DRIVER

### AI IS YOUR CO-PILOT. YOU ARE THE DRIVER

Nothing can replace your authentic voice, your lived experience, or your professional judgment. AI accelerates your process. You bring the substance.

- 1 Always personalize.** Every document AI helps you create should sound like you. Read it out loud. If it does not sound like something you would actually say, rewrite it until it does. Your authenticity is your greatest competitive advantage.
- 2 Never fabricate.** Do not allow AI to invent experiences, skills, degrees, or accomplishments you do not have. Use AI to articulate what is real, not to create what is not.
- 3 Verify every claim.** AI can generate inaccurate information, including statistics, company details, and factual claims. Always verify before including anything in your materials.
- 4 Be transparent when asked.** If an employer asks whether you used AI, be honest. Saying "I used AI as a brainstorming and editing tool while ensuring all content reflects my authentic experience" demonstrates both integrity and competence.
- 5 Tailor every time.** A generic AI-generated resume sent to 50 employers will perform worse than one thoughtfully tailored resume. Quality over quantity. Always.
- 6 Review, revise, own it.** AI drafts. You decide. Read everything critically. Remove anything that feels inauthentic, exaggerated, or disconnected from who you are. If your name is on it, it should represent you.
- 7 Protect your privacy.** Never paste sensitive personal information into any AI tool: Social Security numbers, financial data, medical information, passwords, or student ID numbers. See the Privacy Guide below.
- 8 Use AI to learn, not to bypass.** Understanding how ATS works, why keywords matter, and how Boolean operators function makes you a smarter professional. Do not just use the tools. Understand why they work.

## Protecting Your Privacy on AI Platforms

AI platforms learn from the data users provide. Here is how to protect yourself:

### Claude AI

- ▶ Go to Settings > Privacy. Disable "Training" if you do not want your conversations used to improve the model.
- ▶ Delete conversation history regularly if you prefer not to have past prompts stored.

### ChatGPT

- ▶ Go to Settings > Data Controls > toggle off "Improve the model for everyone."
- ▶ Use Temporary Chat mode for sensitive conversations. These are not saved or used for training.

### Microsoft Copilot

- ▶ When using Copilot through your USI Microsoft 365 account, your data is protected by Microsoft's enterprise privacy policies and is not used for model training.

### General Best Practices for All Platforms

- ▶ Never share: SSN, bank info, medical records, student ID numbers, passwords, or home addresses.
- ▶ De-identify when possible: If sharing a scenario for advice, remove names, specific organizations, and identifying details.
- ▶ Review terms of service: Understand what each platform does with your data before you use it.
- ▶ Log out of accounts when using shared or public computers.



#### PRIVACY REMINDER

Anything you type into an AI tool could potentially be stored, reviewed, or used in training. Treat AI platforms the way you would treat a public conversation. Share the task, not the secrets.

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# PART THREE

## BUILD YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO



# STAGE 1-2: YOUR PERSONAL BRAND AND UNIQUE VALUE

Before you write a single word on your resume, LinkedIn, or cover letter, you need clarity on two things: your personal brand (who you are professionally) and your unique value proposition (what you bring that others do not). These are not just exercises. They are the foundation that makes every other career document authentic, targeted, and powerful.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Discover Your Personal Brand

I am a [your major/program] student (or recent graduate/career changer/alumni) at the University of Southern Indiana. My strengths include [list 3 to 5 strengths]. I am passionate about [your interests/causes]. My career goal is [target role/industry]. Based on this, help me craft a 2 to 3 sentence personal brand statement that captures who I am professionally, what I value, and what I want to be known for. Make it authentic and specific to me, not generic.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Define Your Unique Value Proposition

Here is my personal brand statement: [paste it]. Here are my experiences: [list 3 to 5 key experiences, including jobs, internships, volunteer work, class projects, leadership roles]. What combination of skills, experiences, and perspectives makes me different from other candidates in [your target field]? Help me articulate my unique value proposition in 2 to 3 sentences that I can weave into my resume, LinkedIn About section, cover letters, and interview answers.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Build Your "Tell Me About Yourself" Answer

Here is my personal brand statement: [paste]. Here is my unique value proposition: [paste]. I am interviewing for a [job title] position at [company]. Help me craft a 60 to 90 second "Tell Me About Yourself" response that opens with who I am, highlights what I uniquely bring, and closes with why this role and company align with my career goals. Keep it conversational and confident. I want it to feel natural, not memorized.

## Not sure what your transferable skills are? Start here.

Before you write your brand statement, you need to know what you bring to the table. These companion guides from two of the country's top career centers include transferable skills checklists, self-assessment worksheets, and examples of how to turn everyday experiences into professional language:

- 1 Princeton University Center for Career Development: Resume Guide** — Includes a 3-step transferable skills worksheet with 80+ skills organized by category (communication, leadership, research, teamwork, problem-solving) and a method for turning each skill into accomplishment statements. Start on the transferable skills checklist and circle your top 10.
- 2 Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences: CVs and Cover Letters** — Especially valuable for graduate students. Includes annotated CV and cover letter samples across multiple disciplines, plus guidance on translating academic research experience into language non-academic employers understand.

*Both PDFs are linked in the Career Readiness Resources section at the end of this guide on page 94. Complete the skills identification exercises first, then return here and use the AI prompts below to build your brand statement around what you discover.*



# RESUME BEST PRACTICES FOR 2026

Your resume is a marketing document, not a biography. Its purpose is to prove you are a strong candidate for a specific role in 6 to 10 seconds. Every word should earn its place. Here is what works in 2026:

## Resume Structure for 2026

- ▶ **Contact Information:** Name (14 to 16pt bold), phone, professional email, LinkedIn URL, city/state (full address is no longer necessary).
- ▶ **Professional Summary:** 2 to 3 sentences that communicate your brand, your target role, and your strongest qualifications. Tailor this for every application.
- ▶ **Education:** Degree, institution, expected graduation or graduation date. Include GPA if 3.0+ and relevant coursework if it supports the role.
- ▶ **Experience:** List in reverse chronological order. Use CAR method bullet points (see below). Include job title, company, location, and dates.
- ▶ **Skills:** Hard skills and technical tools relevant to your target role. Include both full terms and acronyms.
- ▶ **Optional Sections:** Certifications, Projects, Volunteer Experience, Leadership, Publications, Languages.

Keep your resume to one page if you have fewer than 10 years of experience. Two pages are appropriate for graduate students, career changers with extensive backgrounds, or professionals with 10+ years.

## The CAR Method: Writing Powerful Resume Bullet Points with AI

### CAR = CHALLENGE + ACTION + RESULT

Every strong resume bullet answers three questions: What was the challenge or situation? What action did you take? What was the measurable result? The CAR method keeps your bullets focused, impactful, and employer-centered. Here is the formula: [Strong Action Verb] + [What You Did] + [For Whom/Why] + [Measurable Outcome]

## CAR Bullet Examples

- ▶ **Weak:** "Helped with social media."
- ▶ **Strong:** "Developed and executed a 12-week social media content calendar for the university's alumni engagement office, increasing Instagram engagement by 34% and growing the follower base by 580 new followers."
- ▶ **Weak:** "Responsible for customer service."
- ▶ **Strong:** "Resolved an average of 45 customer inquiries per shift by identifying root causes and implementing first-call solutions, achieving a 96% satisfaction rating over 6 months."
- ▶ **Weak:** "Worked on a research project."
- ▶ **Strong:** "Collaborated with a faculty mentor to design and conduct a mixed-methods research study on workforce retention in rural healthcare, presenting findings to 120 attendees at the Midwest Sociology Conference."

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Turn Your Experience into CAR Bullets

I worked as a [job title] at [company/organization]. My responsibilities included: [describe what you did in plain language]. Use the CAR method (Challenge, Action, Result) to write 4 to 5 strong resume bullet points. Start each with a powerful action verb. Include measurable outcomes where possible. If I cannot recall exact numbers, suggest realistic placeholders I can verify and replace. Align the language with this job description: [paste target JD].

## *Sample Resume Layout (Text Reference)*

# ARCHIE EAGLE

Business Administration Student | Economics Minor  
(812) 555-0101 | | aeagle.acct@eagles.usi.edu | Evansville IN

### **Objective**

Competitive and driven business administration student with demonstrated leadership in nonprofit governance and financial planning. Known for exceeding expectations with a commitment to continuous learning. Seeking summer 2026 internship in banking, finance, or business operations.

### **Education and Training**

**University of Southern Indiana | Evansville, IN Expected in**

**May 2027**

Bachelor of Science | Business Administration

Romain College of Business | AACSB Accredited

- Honors & Awards: Dean's List Fall 2024 – Present | Merit Scholarship Recipient
- GPA: 3.9/4.0

*Relevant Coursework:* Introduction to Business, Public Speaking, Ethics, Principles of Management

### **Skills**

- **Technical:** Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word, PowerPoint), Financial Analysis, Budget Management
- **Analytical:** Cost-Benefit Analysis, Market Research, Strategic Planning, Data Interpretation
- **Professional:** Public Speaking, Ethical Decision-Making, Team Collaboration, Client Relations

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## *Sample Resume Layout (Text Reference - Continued)*

### WORK EXPERIENCE

#### **Grocery Associate, Local Grocery Store Evansville, IN**

**June 2023-January 2026**

- Handled 50+ customer transactions per shift during peak hours by processing orders quickly and accurately, helping keep wait times low and earning repeat customers
- Trained 8+ new hires on register operations, store procedures, and customer service standards, getting them ready to work the floor independently within 2 weeks
- Took ownership of restocking and organizing 3+ product aisles per shift during busy periods, making it easier for customers to find what they needed

#### **Server Trainer, Restaurant Evansville, IN**

**May 2022-May 2023**

- Trained 10+ new servers on a 40-item menu and service standards through hands-on coaching, helping them confidently handle their own tables within the first week
- Managed 5+ tables during high-volume dinner rushes serving 100+ guests per shift while staying organized, consistently maintaining service quality on the busiest nights

### CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

#### **Board Member | Local Nonprofit Organization**

**January 2024 – Present**

- Participated in monthly strategic planning discussions during a period of organizational growth, helping shape decisions around programming priorities and community outreach
- Researched 5+ venue options and built a cost comparison for upcoming events, helping the board select a location that saved 20% on the original budget estimate

#### **Honors Choir | Member**

**2021 – 2022**

- Earned 1 of 30 spots through a competitive audition process and represented the school at 4 regional performances

*Eagle | Page 2*

# COVER LETTER TEMPLATE AND STRATEGY

A strong cover letter does three things: it connects your unique value to the employer's specific needs, it demonstrates that you have researched the company, and it shows personality and enthusiasm that a resume alone cannot convey. Here is the structure:

## Cover Letter Structure (3 to 4 Paragraphs)

### Paragraph 1 (The Hook):

State the role you are applying for, how you found it, and one compelling reason you are excited about this specific company. Name something specific: a recent initiative, a company value, or a news story.

### Paragraph 2 (Your Value):

Connect 2 to 3 of your strongest qualifications directly to the requirements in the job description. Use specific examples. This is where your CAR stories come to life in narrative form.

### Paragraph 3 (The Bridge):

Explain why this company and this role align with your career goals and values. Show that you are not just looking for any job. You are looking for this job.

### Paragraph 4 (The Close):

Express enthusiasm, restate your interest, and include a professional call to action. "I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience in [X] can contribute to [company]'s goals."

#### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Generate a Targeted Cover Letter

Write a professional cover letter for a [job title] position at [company]. Here is the job description: [paste]. Here is my resume: [paste]. Here is my personal brand statement: [paste]. Research this company and reference one specific initiative, value, or recent news item. Connect my strongest qualifications directly to their needs. Tone: confident, genuine, and enthusiastic. Keep it to 3 to 4 paragraphs. Do not use generic filler phrases like "I am writing to express my interest."

## *Sample Cover Letter Layout (Text Reference)*

# ARCHIE EAGLE

Business Administration Student | Economics Minor  
(812) 555-0101 | | aeagle.acct@eagles.usi.edu | Evansville IN

**February 25, 2026**

[Hiring Manager Name]

[Company Name]

[Company Address]

[City, State ZIP]

Dear [Hiring Manager Name],

I am writing to express my interest in the [Position Title] internship at [Company Name] for summer 2026. As a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with an Economics minor at the University of Southern Indiana, I have built a strong foundation in financial analysis, strategic planning, and team leadership. I am excited about the opportunity to bring that foundation to your team and continue growing in a hands-on professional environment.

My work experience has given me practical skills that translate well to banking, finance, and business operations. As a Grocery Associate, I processed 50+ customer transactions per shift with accuracy and speed, trained 8+ new hires on store procedures, and took ownership of inventory management across multiple aisles. Before that, I worked as a Server Trainer where I coached 10+ new team members on service standards and managed high-volume shifts serving 100+ guests per night. These roles taught me how to stay organized under pressure, communicate clearly with different types of people, and take initiative when something needs to get done.

Outside of work, I serve as a Board Member for a local nonprofit organization where I contribute to strategic planning discussions and have conducted cost analysis research that helped the organization save 20% on event venue costs. This experience has strengthened my ability to think critically about budgets, weigh options, and present recommendations to a group. I have also maintained a 3.9 GPA and earned a spot on the Dean's List every semester since Fall 2024, which reflects my commitment to balancing multiple responsibilities at a high level.

I would welcome the chance to learn more about [Company Name] and discuss how my background in business, finance, and leadership could contribute to your team. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Archie Eagle

# CURRICULUM VITAE (CV) GUIDE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A CV is different from a resume. While a resume is a concise, targeted marketing document (typically 1 to 2 pages), a CV is a comprehensive record of your academic and professional history. CVs are used for academic positions, research roles, graduate school applications, fellowships, and certain government or international roles. There is no page limit for a CV.

## CV Sections (in order)

- ▶ Contact Information
- ▶ Education (list degrees in reverse chronological order, include dissertation/thesis titles)
- ▶ Research Experience and Interests
- ▶ Publications and Presentations
- ▶ Teaching Experience
- ▶ Grants and Fellowships
- ▶ Professional Experience
- ▶ Certifications and Licenses
- ▶ Professional Memberships and Affiliations
- ▶ Honors and Awards
- ▶ Service and Volunteer Work
- ▶ Skills and Languages

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Build Your CV from Your Resume

Here is my current resume: [paste]. I need to expand this into a full academic CV for [purpose: graduate school application, academic job, fellowship]. Add sections for Research Experience, Publications, Presentations, Teaching, Professional Memberships, and Honors. Help me format it in standard academic CV style. Ask me follow-up questions about any section where you need more information from me.

## *Sample CV Layout (Text Reference)*

### **ARCHIE EAGLE**

Adjunct Instructor, Department of Business Administration  
Romain College of Business  
University of Southern Indiana  
8600 University Blvd.  
Evansville, IN 47712

Phone: (812) 555-0101

Email: aeagle.acct@eagles.usi.edu

Home: 1234 W. Eagle Pride Ave, Evansville, IN 47714

Mobile: (812) 555-0102

aeagle.personal@gmail.com

#### **EDUCATION**

##### **MBA | Indiana University | Bloomington, IN**

*May 2019*

Master of Business Administration (MBA) | Strategic Management

Thesis: "Scaling Organizational Efficiency in Midwestern Mid-Market Firms: A Case Study of Southwest Indiana Manufacturing"

Advisor: Dr. Lillian Mosher

##### **B. S. | University of Southern Indiana | Evansville, IN**

*May 2017*

Bachelor of Science, Business Administration

Romain College of Business | AACSB Accredited

Minor: Economics

#### **RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Strategic management in regional economies; ethical decision-making in business; cost-benefit analysis in nonprofit governance; workforce development and talent pipeline strategy in AACSB-accredited business education; experiential learning pedagogy for undergraduate business students

*Eagle | Page 1*

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

#### **University of Southern Indiana, Romain College of Business | Evansville, IN**

*Adjunct Instructor, Department of Business Administration | August 2022 – Present*

- Designed and delivered BUAD 100: Introduction to Business for sections of 35+ undergraduate students per semester, incorporating case-based learning and local industry guest speakers
- Developed BUAD 265: Principles of Management course materials emphasizing ethical leadership, strategic planning, and team dynamics aligned with AACSB learning assurance standards
- Created and facilitated experiential learning assignments connecting students with Evansville-area organizations including Berry Global, Old National Bank, and the Southwest Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- Mentored 40+ students per academic year through individualized office hours focused on career readiness and professional development
- Achieved average student evaluation scores of 4.7/5.0 across six semesters of instruction

#### **University of Southern Indiana, Romain College of Business | Evansville, IN**

*Graduate Teaching Assistant, Principles of Management | August 2021 – May 2022*

- Led weekly discussion sections of 25 students for undergraduate management course under Dr. Robert Kellam
- Graded case study analyses, facilitated peer review exercises, and supported exam development
- Assisted in piloting a new team-based learning module on ethical decision-making frameworks

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

#### **Old National Bank | Evansville, IN**

*Branch Operations Analyst | June 2019 – July 2022*

- Analyzed branch-level financial performance data across 12 regional locations, producing quarterly cost-benefit reports that informed resource allocation decisions
- Collaborated with senior leadership on strategic planning initiatives to improve customer retention by 15% over two fiscal years
- Trained and onboarded 20+ new branch associates on compliance procedures, financial products, and service standards
- Led a cross-functional team of 6 in implementing a streamlined customer transaction process, reducing average wait times by 22%

*Eagle | Page 2*

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)**

#### **Berry Global Group, Inc. | Evansville, IN**

*Business Operations Intern | May 2018 – August 2018*

- Conducted market research and competitive analysis for the Consumer Packaging division, contributing findings to a regional product strategy presentation
- Assisted in budget management and cost tracking for a \$2.5M packaging line upgrade project
- Compiled data for quarterly operational reviews using Excel-based financial modeling and data visualization

#### **Koch Enterprises, Inc. | Evansville, IN**

*Administrative Support Associate | June 2016 – May 2017*

- Supported the finance team with accounts receivable processing, vendor coordination, and internal audit preparation
- Organized and maintained digital and physical filing systems serving 4 departments with 50+ employees
- Drafted internal communications and coordinated scheduling for monthly management meetings

### **PUBLICATIONS AND SCHOLARLY WORK**

- Eagle, A. (2024). Bridging the classroom and the community: Experiential learning approaches for undergraduate business administration students in regional economies. *Midwest Journal of Business Education*, 12(2), 45–58.
- Eagle, A. (2023). *Ethical frameworks for early-career professionals: Integrating virtue ethics into introductory business curriculum* [Paper presentation]. Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
- Eagle, A., & Kellam, R. (2022). Nonprofit board governance and financial decision-making: Lessons from small-city organizations. *Indiana Business Review*, 97(3), 22–29.

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- Eagle, A. (2024, April). *Teaching business ethics through place-based case studies: An Evansville model* [Paper presentation]. Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business Annual Conference on Business Education, Tampa, FL.
- Eagle, A. (2023, October). *Developing workforce-ready graduates: Partnerships between AACSB programs and regional industry* [Paper presentation]. Midwest Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.
- Eagle, A. (2023, March). *Cost-benefit analysis as pedagogy: Embedding real-world financial thinking in the undergraduate classroom* [Poster presentation]. USI Faculty Scholarship Symposium, Evansville, IN.

*Eagle | Page 3*

### **SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP**

#### **Board Member, Evansville Community Arts Alliance | *January 2020 – Present***

- Participated in monthly strategic planning discussions during a period of organizational growth, helping shape decisions around programming priorities and community outreach
- Researched 5+ venue options and built a cost comparison for upcoming events, helping the board select a location that saved 20% on the original budget estimate
- Faculty Advisor, USI Student Business Association | August 2022 – Present
- Guided 30+ student members in professional development workshops, networking events, and community service projects
- Coordinated with the USI Career Success Center and Evansville-Area Human Resource Association (EHRA) to host on-campus employer panels

#### **Volunteer, United Way of Southwestern Indiana | *September 2018 – Present***

- Facilitated financial literacy workshops for young professionals in partnership with Old National Bank and German American Bank
- Served on the annual campaign planning committee, assisting in budget forecasting and donor communications

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- Academy of Management, Member | *2021 – Present*
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Affiliate | *2022 – Present*
- Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, Member | *2022 – Present*
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Member | *2019 – Present*
- Evansville-Area Human Resource Association (EHRA), Member | *2019 – Present*

### **SKILLS**

- **Technical:** Microsoft Office Suite (advanced Excel including pivot tables, VLOOKUP, and financial modeling), Blackboard/Canvas LMS, Tableau, SPSS, QuickBooks
- **Pedagogical:** Case-based instruction, team-based learning, experiential learning design, rubric development, AACSB learning assurance assessment
- **Professional:** Public speaking, strategic planning, financial analysis, budget management, client relations, ethical decision-making

### **REFERENCES**

- **Dr. Robert Kellam** | Associate Professor of Management Romain College of Business, University of Southern Indiana | (812) 555-0202 | [rkellam@usi.edu](mailto:rkellam@usi.edu)
- **Dr. Priya Vasquez** | Dean of Academic Affairs Romain College of Business, University of Southern Indiana | (812) 555-0303 | [pvasquez@usi.edu](mailto:pvasquez@usi.edu)
- **Margaret Thornton** | Senior Vice President, Branch Operations Old National Bank, Evansville, IN | (812) 555-0404 | [mthornton@oldnational.com](mailto:mthornton@oldnational.com)

# LINKEDIN PROFILE OPTIMIZATION AND THE 2026 ALGORITHM

Your LinkedIn profile is not an online resume. It is a searchable, living digital brand that works for you 24 hours a day. In 2026, LinkedIn's algorithm has undergone a major transformation. Understanding how it works is the difference between being discoverable and being invisible.

## What Changed: LinkedIn's 2026 Algorithm

LinkedIn's algorithm has shifted dramatically. The platform now uses an AI-powered visibility system that prioritizes relevance, expertise, and genuine engagement over viral tactics, posting frequency, or engagement hacks. Here is what you need to know:

- ▶ **Relevance over reach.** LinkedIn now shows your content to smaller but more targeted audiences. Fewer people may see your posts, but the right people are more likely to see them.
- ▶ **Your profile IS the algorithm's evidence file.** LinkedIn reads your headline, About section, and experience to determine what topics you are an expert in and who should see your content. A vague or outdated profile means the algorithm cannot categorize you, and your visibility drops.
- ▶ **Engagement bait is dead.** Posts asking for likes, shares, or generic comments are detected and suppressed. The algorithm rewards thoughtful, multi-sentence comments and genuine professional conversations.
- ▶ **Consistency beats volume.** Posting around 2 to 3 core topics consistently helps the algorithm understand your niche. Random, scattered content confuses the system.
- ▶ **Hashtags no longer drive distribution.** LinkedIn now identifies themes from your content itself, not from hashtags. Focus on writing clearly about your area of expertise instead of tagging trending hashtags.
- ▶ **People outperform company pages.** Personal profiles dominate the feed. Your voice and perspective matter more than any branded content.
- ▶ **Comments are the most powerful engagement signal.** Thoughtful comments on other people's posts boost your visibility more than posting your own content without engagement.

## The 6-to-10 Job Description Strategy for LinkedIn SEO

This is the strategy that changes everything. Instead of guessing what keywords to use on your LinkedIn profile, you are going to reverse-engineer them from the job market itself.

- ▶ **Step 1:** Find 6 to 10 job descriptions for roles you genuinely want to apply for. Save them in a document.
- ▶ **Step 2:** Paste all of them into Claude AI, ChatGPT, or Copilot.
- ▶ **Step 3:** Use the SEO Keywords prompt from earlier in this guide to identify the most frequently repeated terms.
- ▶ **Step 4:** Integrate those keywords naturally into your LinkedIn Headline, About section, Experience descriptions, and Skills section.
- ▶ **Step 5:** Revisit this process every semester or whenever your career goals shift.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: LinkedIn Profile Full Optimization

Here are the top SEO keywords I identified from 8 job descriptions in my target field: [paste your keyword list]. My personal brand statement is: [paste]. I am a [major/background] at USI targeting [type of role] in [industry/location]. Using these keywords, write: (1) Five LinkedIn headline options under 120 characters, (2) A complete About section under 2,600 characters that is SEO-optimized, conversational, and includes a call to action, (3) Suggestions for my Skills section (top 10 skills to add). Optimize for recruiter search, not just reading.

**Important note on the About section:** LinkedIn allows up to 2,600 characters, but only the first 300 characters are visible on desktop before the reader must click "See more," and even fewer on mobile. Make sure the opening lines function as a strong hook that earns the click, not just a polished introduction buried at the end.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Optimize LinkedIn Experience Section

Here is my resume entry for [job/internship title] at [company]: [paste]. Rewrite this for my LinkedIn Experience section. Make it more conversational than a resume. Include relevant SEO keywords for [target role]. Expand on the impact of my work. Include 3 to 5 bullet points. Write in a tone that reflects my personal brand: [paste brand statement].

## Sample LinkedIn Profile Checklist (Text Reference)

# LinkedIn Profile SEO Optimization Checklist

Maximize your visibility in recruiter and LinkedIn searches

## Professional Headshot

- High-resolution photo (400x400 px minimum), face fills ~60% of frame
- Clean background, professional attire, natural smile with eye contact
- Even lighting with no harsh shadows; photo taken within last 1–2 years

## Banner Image

- Custom banner uploaded (1584 x 396 px) — no default gray
- Reflects professional brand; includes tagline or value proposition
- Key text/images not hidden behind headshot; previewed on mobile + desktop

## Headline (120 Characters — Highest SEO Weight)

- Replaced default title with keyword-rich custom headline
- Leads with target job title, followed by 2–3 industry keywords (use | or •)
- Includes a unique differentiator; avoids buzzwords (guru, ninja, rockstar)

## About Section (2,600 Characters)

- Strong hook in first 2–3 lines (only ~300 characters show before truncation)
- Written in first person; 8–12 target keywords woven in naturally
- 3–5 accomplishments with quantifiable results (numbers, percentages, dollars)
- Ends with keyword block of core competencies + call to action

## Work Experience

- Each role linked to official company LinkedIn page (for logo + search boost)
- 3–5 keyword-rich bullets per role starting with action verbs
- Measurable outcomes included; language mirrors target job postings
- Relevant media attached (presentations, reports, portfolio links)

## Education

- All degrees listed with correct school LinkedIn pages linked
- Certifications prominently displayed (SHRM-CP, CPRW, PMP, etc.)
- Relevant honors, activities, and continuing education included

## Volunteer Experience

- All volunteer roles added with keyword-rich descriptions
- Impact quantified; transferable skills connected to professional brand

## Skills & Endorsements (At least 50)

- 50 slots filled; top 3 pinned to match target role keywords
- Exact phrases from job descriptions used as skills
- Endorsements requested from colleagues; Skill Assessments completed

## Mining Job Descriptions with AI for SEO Keywords

- 5–10 target job postings collected (LinkedIn, Indeed, Handshake, company sites)
- AI prompt: “Extract the top 20 repeated keywords from these descriptions”
- AI prompt: “Categorize keywords into Hard Skills, Soft Skills, Tools, Industry Terms”
- AI prompt: “Compare my LinkedIn profile to these keywords and identify gaps”
- AI prompt: “Rewrite my headline/About section embedding top keywords naturally”
- Master keyword list created and refreshed quarterly
- All AI outputs verified and personalized with authentic voice

YOUR AI CO-PILOT CAREER TOOLKIT |  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

# 4

## PART FOUR

LAUNCH YOUR  
SEARCH



# START WITH A STRATEGY NOT A SEARCH BAR

Before you type a single keyword, the most effective job seekers answer a question most never ask: who, specifically, do I want to work for? That shift from searching broadly to targeting deliberately is the core premise of Steve Dalton's research-backed framework, *The 2-Hour Job Search* (Dalton, 2020). Dalton argues that the majority of job search energy is wasted on low-probability applications submitted to organizations the applicant knows little about and has no connection to. The antidote is a focused, prioritized target list built before any applications go out.

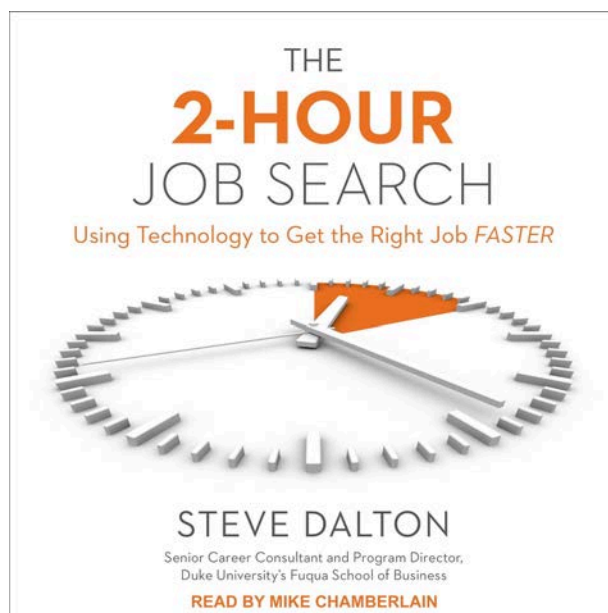
Dalton's LAMP method provides the structure. LAMP is an acronym for List, Alumni, Motivation, and Posting. You begin by generating a list of roughly 40 employer targets in your field and geographic range. Then you assess each organization across three dimensions: whether you have any alumni or personal connections there (Alumni), how genuinely motivated you are to work there (Motivation), and whether an active posting currently exists (Posting). The result is a prioritized employer list that tells you not just where jobs exist, but where you have the highest probability of a warm introduction, a successful interview, and a meaningful career fit.

This framework reframes your entire job search. You are not scanning job boards hoping something looks good. You are building intelligence on a focused set of target organizations, activating your network strategically, and entering conversations as a prepared and intentional candidate rather than an anonymous applicant.

The tools that follow, including Boolean search, Google X-ray, Google Alerts, and AI research strategies, all work in service of this method. Use them to build and refine your LAMP list, gather intelligence on your target organizations, and identify the people already inside those organizations who can open a door.

## Reference

- Dalton, S. (2020). *The 2-hour job search: Using technology to get the right job faster* (2nd ed.). Ten Speed Press.



# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY: WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

A strategic job search is not about applying to everything. It is about finding the roles that align with your skills, values, and career goals, and then presenting yourself as the strongest possible candidate for those specific opportunities.

## Using Google as a Job Search Engine

Most job seekers limit their search to LinkedIn and Indeed. Those platforms are useful, but they represent the most crowded lane in the job market. Google, used strategically, opens a different lane entirely, one most applicants never think to use. Three tools make it powerful: Boolean operators, X-ray search, and Google Alerts. Together, they transform Google from a general search engine into a precision job search system.

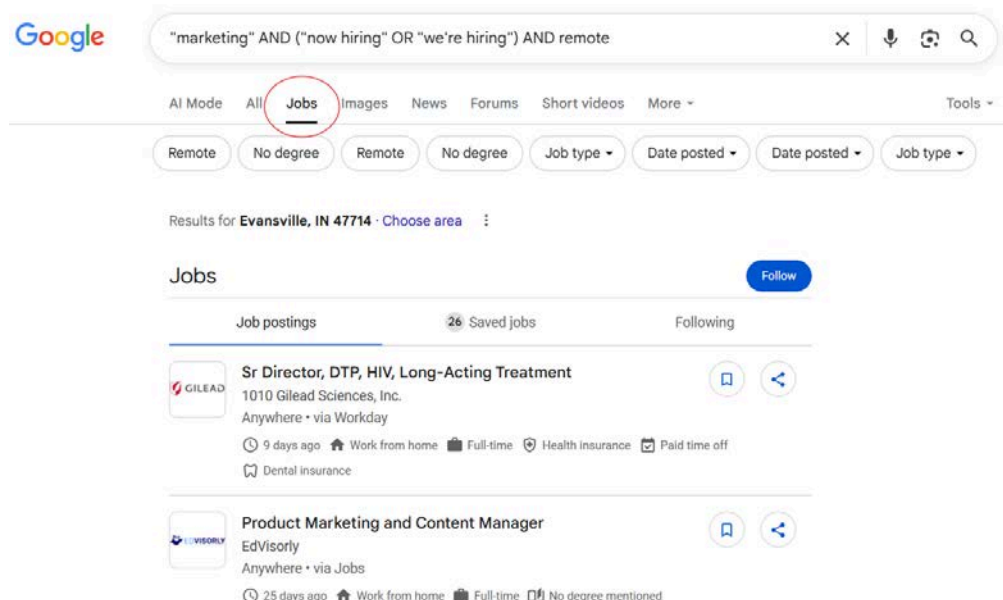
## Boolean Operators: The Foundation

Boolean operators are the syntax that makes targeted Google searching possible in a search bar. Rather than typing a vague phrase and scrolling through irrelevant results, Boolean strings tell Google exactly what you are looking for and what to exclude. The core operators every job seeker needs are:

- **AND requires both terms to appear:** "project management" AND "entry level"
- **OR expands results to include either term:** ("nonprofit" OR "NGO") AND "program coordinator"
- **Quotation marks lock in exact phrases:** "bachelor of science in sport management"
- **The minus sign excludes unwanted terms:** "marketing manager" AND Evansville NOT senior

A complete Boolean job search string might look like this:

- ("event coordinator" OR "event manager") AND ("sport management" OR "athletics") AND Indiana AND ("entry level" OR "new grad")
- ("human resources" OR "HR generalist") AND "entry level" AND (Evansville OR "Southern Indiana")



# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY:

## WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

Think of Boolean operators as instructions you give a search engine. AND tells it you need both terms. OR tells it either one will do. NOT tells it to leave something out entirely. Quotation marks mean you want that exact phrase, word for word. Parentheses keep grouped terms together so your search logic does not fall apart. A wildcard, represented by an asterisk, fills in for any word, so a search like "market\*" can return marketing, marketer, and marketplace all at once. Recruiters and talent acquisition professionals use these same operators daily to source candidates across LinkedIn, job boards, and company databases, which means learning this syntax puts you on equal footing with the people looking to hire you. The following reference table outlines core Boolean operators and their functions, paired with an AI-assisted string generation technique to help you build targeted, strategic search queries with confidence. Boolean search allows you to create more precise and targeted search queries to find the best-fit role and company faster.

### Boolean Operators Quick Reference (continued)

Operator	Function	Example
AND	Narrows results: both terms must appear	project management AND healthcare
OR	Broadens results; either term may appear	recruiter OR talent acquisition
NOT	Excludes a term from results	marketing NOT social media

# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY: WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

Operator	Function	Example
" " (QUOTES)	Searches for an exact phrase	"Human resources business partner"
() (PARENTHESES)	Groups terms to control search logic	(HR OR human resources) AND compliance
* (WILDCARD)	Captures word variations from a root	manag* finds manager, managing, management



# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY: WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

## Using AI to Build Your Boolean Strings

Constructing effective Boolean strings from scratch takes practice. One of the most practical applications of AI in your job search is using it as a Boolean string generator before you ever open Google. Rather than guessing at the right terminology, you can prompt an AI tool to do the linguistic heavy lifting.

Try prompts like these in Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, or a similar tool:

*"I am a recent graduate with a degree in health services administration looking for entry-level roles in hospital operations or healthcare management in Indiana. Write me three Boolean search strings I can use in Google to find job postings."*

*"I want to find nonprofit organizations in the Evansville area that work in youth development or workforce readiness. Write a Google Boolean string I can use to surface their careers pages."*

The AI output gives you a starting string. Your job is to refine it based on what the actual search returns. Treat it as a first draft, not a final answer. Over two or three iterations, you will develop a search string that surfaces roles precisely aligned to your goals.

## Boolean Logic Works Beyond Google

The same Boolean logic that powers Google searches works directly within most major job platforms. For example, LinkedIn, Indeed, FlexJobs, Zip Recruiter, Idealist and USAJobs all support Boolean operators in their search bars, with some variation in syntax. On LinkedIn, for example, you can type ("HR coordinator" OR "talent acquisition") AND "entry level" directly into the job search field and filter results from there. On Indeed, quotation marks and AND/OR operators function the same way as in Google. Learning this syntax once gives you a precision tool that works across every platform in your search ecosystem.



# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY: WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

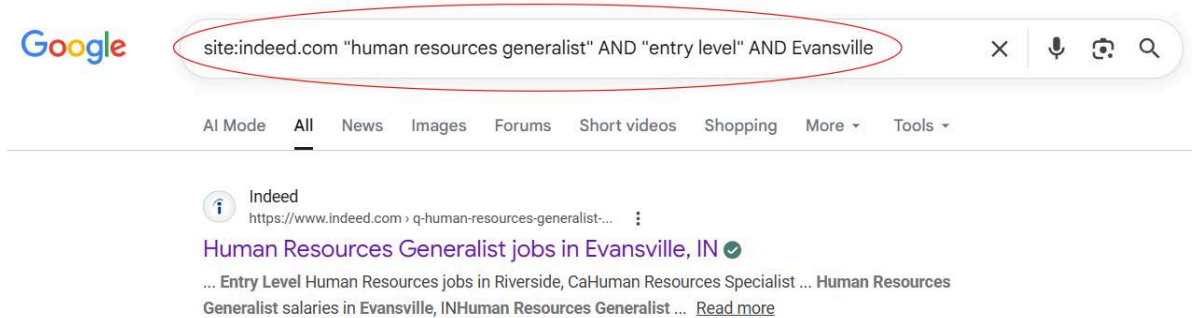
## Google X-Ray Search: Going Deeper

X-ray search takes Boolean logic one step further by using the site: operator to search within a specific website or domain. This surfaces job postings, career pages, and opportunities that standard job boards never aggregate (Workology, 2025). Small and mid-size employers frequently post positions only on their own websites. Nonprofits, government agencies, and trade associations often maintain separate career pages that never cross-post to LinkedIn or Indeed. X-ray search finds them.

Examples:

- `site:indeed.com "human resources generalist" AND "entry level" AND Evansville`
- `site:usajobs.gov "workforce development" AND "bachelor's degree"`
- `site:[companyname].com "careers" AND "entry level" AND "supply chain"`
- `"now hiring" AND "social media manager" AND (remote OR "work from home") AND "bachelor's degree"`

See example below:



**One important limitation to know:** since 2024, LinkedIn has restricted search engine access to profile data, meaning Google X-ray searches of LinkedIn now return limited results and no longer surface key fields including Headline, About, and Experience (PCRecruiter, 2024). The reason behind this change has not been officially confirmed by LinkedIn, though many sourcing professionals have speculated it reflects a push toward the platform's own paid tools, including LinkedIn Recruiter and Sales Navigator. For job seekers, this means you should not rely on Google to surface LinkedIn profiles or job postings the way you once could. LinkedIn's internal search remains useful for what it is, but Google is no longer a reliable back channel into the platform.

**Where X-ray search remains fully effective is everywhere else.** Company career portals, nonprofit and association websites, university job boards, government employment portals, and industry-specific hiring pages are all indexed by Google and respond well to site: searches. These are also frequently the sources that list positions before or instead of posting them to major job boards, which is precisely why this technique gives you an edge. The job seeker who searches `site:usajobs.gov` or `site:[targetcompany].com` with a well-built Boolean string is finding opportunities that the LinkedIn-and-Indeed-only job seeker never sees (Job Search Guide, 2023).

# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY:

## WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

### Building Your Target List: AI Research, Steppingblocks, and Salary Intelligence

Once you have a sense of the industries and roles you are targeting, the next step is building the employer list at the center of your LAMP framework. This is where AI tools, USI's proprietary alumni data platform, and labor market salary tools work together.

### Using AI to Identify Target Employers

AI is an efficient brainstorming partner for generating an initial employer list when you are not sure where to start. Use prompts like:

*"I have a degree in kinesiology and want to work in corporate wellness or community health programming in the Midwest. Give me 20 types of organizations and specific employer examples I should research."*

*"What industries commonly hire graduates with a background in communications and nonprofit management? List specific types of employers in Indiana and regionally."*

AI output here is a starting point for research, not a verified hiring list. Use it to surface employer categories and organization names you had not considered, then verify each one through the tools below.

### Steppingblocks: Where USI Alumni Work

USI students and alumni have access to Steppingblocks, a valuable platform that draws on alumni outcome data to show where USI graduates have gone, what roles they hold, and what they earn. This is one of the most underutilized research tools available to you.

### Use Steppingblocks to:

Search by major or field to see which employers have historically hired USI graduates in roles aligned with yours. This surfaces organizations already familiar with USI's programs and already inclined to consider USI candidates. Identify specific alumni working at your target organizations, which directly supports the Alumni column of your LAMP list and gives you warm connection points for informational interviews. Review salary ranges and career path data based on real outcomes from people who started where you are. This informs both your expectations and your negotiation preparation.

Access Steppingblocks through the Career Success Center portal or by contacting a career coordinator directly.

# JOB SEARCH STRATEGY: WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER (continued)

## Salary Research: ONET and Beyond

Salary expectations grounded in data give you credibility in every conversation, from informational interviews to formal negotiations. Two reliable sources anchor this research.

O\*NET OnLine (onetonline.org), maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides detailed salary ranges, skill requirements, and job outlook data organized by occupation code. Search your target role title, review the national and state-level wage data, and note the skills and competencies listed. These become the keywords you build into your resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile.

Cross-reference O\*NET data with Steppingblocks alumni salary outcomes for a more localized and field-specific picture. Where the two sources align, you have a reliable market rate. Where they diverge, note the context and ask about it directly in informational interviews.



Welcome to **Steppingblocks**

Boost potential with data-driven career guidance for any pathway

# Google Alerts: Passive Intelligence Gathering

Boolean search requires you to go looking. Google Alerts brings opportunities to you. A Google Alert is a free notification tool that monitors the web for new content matching your keywords and delivers results directly to your inbox on a schedule you set. For job seekers, this means you can track new postings, company hiring announcements, and industry news without logging into a single job board.

To set up a job search alert, go to [google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts) and build a keyword string using the same Boolean logic you would use in a search. Useful alert strings include:

- "sport management" AND "hiring" AND Indiana
- "HR coordinator" AND "entry level" AND Evansville
- "marketing" AND ("now hiring" OR "we're hiring") AND remote
- [Target company name] AND ("careers" OR "job opening" OR "we're hiring")

See example below:

The screenshot shows the Google Alerts configuration page. At the top, the word "Alerts" is displayed in a large font, with the subtitle "Monitor the web for interesting new content" below it. A search bar contains the query: "sport management" AND "hiring" AND Indiana. Below the search bar, there are several dropdown menus for configuration: "How often" is set to "At most once a day", "Sources" is "Automatic", "Language" is "English", "Region" is "Any Region", "How many" is "Only the best results", and "Deliver to" is "hopingforblueskies@gmail.com". At the bottom, there is a blue "Create Alert" button and a "Hide options" link.

Set alerts to deliver daily or weekly depending on how active your search is. Over time, your alerts become an intelligence feed that tells you which companies are growing, which are hiring repeatedly in your target field, and which roles surface most consistently, all of which informs where to direct your networking energy.

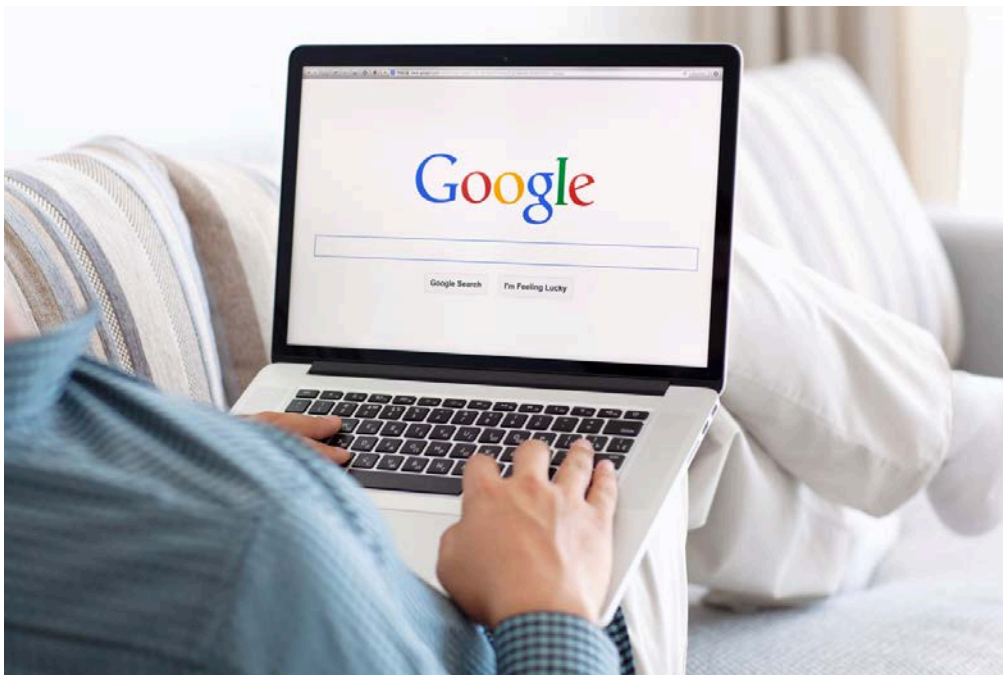
# Google Alerts: Passive Intelligence Gathering (continued)

## Why This Combination Works

A 2024 LinkedIn report found that 67% of recruiters struggle to find quality candidates, reinforcing that a multi-channel approach benefits both sides of the hiring equation (LinkedIn, 2024, as cited in Liu, 2025). Referrals represent only about 7% of total applicants but account for 30 to 50% of actual hires, making them significantly more effective than cold applications through job boards alone (Careery, 2026). Boolean search, X-ray search, and Google Alerts do not replace networking. They tell you exactly where to network, which companies are hiring, and what language those employers are using, before most applicants even know a role exists.

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# From Intelligence to Action: Informational Interviews and Intentional Applications

Building a target list and gathering employer intelligence only creates value when it leads to human connection. Research without outreach is just preparation that never gets used. The final step of a strategic job search is activating your network around the specific organizations on your LAMP list.

Start by identifying who you already know, or who you are one connection away from, at each of your target employers. Steppingblocks is your first resource for this at USI. LinkedIn is your second. Search your target organization by name, filter by your university or geographic network, and look for alumni, former classmates, faculty connections, or second-degree contacts who currently work there or have in the past.

When you find a relevant connection, the goal is not to ask for a job. It is to request a 20 to 30 minute informational interview, a conversation in which you learn about their experience, their organization, and the field from someone living it. Informational interviews build relationships before a posting exists, give you insider language and context that sharpens your application materials, and position you as a thoughtful and prepared candidate when a role does open. They also move you from anonymous applicant to known quantity in the mind of someone who may influence hiring decisions.

## Putting AI to Work: Informational Interview Support

**Drafting your outreach message: Prompt an AI tool with something like this:**

*"I am a USI senior majoring in health services administration. I found [Name] on Steppingblocks and see they work in hospital operations at Deaconess. Write a short, professional LinkedIn message requesting a 20-minute informational interview. I want to sound prepared and genuine, not like I am asking for a job."*

**Preparing your questions: Once your meeting is confirmed, use AI to build research-informed questions:**

*"I have an informational interview with an operations coordinator at a regional hospital system. I have read their recent press release about expanding outpatient services. Help me write five thoughtful questions that show I have done my homework and am genuinely curious about the field, not just fishing for job leads."*

**Synthesizing what you learn: After several conversations, use AI to make sense of the patterns:**

*"I have had informational interviews with three people working in nonprofit workforce development. Here are my notes from each conversation. What themes are emerging about the skills they value, the challenges in the field, and how they describe a strong candidate?"*

In each case, you are directing the AI with specific context you already hold. The output only becomes useful because you bring the knowledge of who you talked to, what you read, and what you observed. That is the distinction between AI as a shortcut and AI as a thought partner.

The full sequence, from AI-assisted brainstorming and Boolean search to Steppingblocks alumni research to network-activated informational interviews, is not a set of separate activities. It is a single integrated strategy. Every tool in this section is designed to get you to the same place: a focused list of target organizations, a warm connection inside each of them, and the preparation to make every conversation count.



# INTERVIEW PREPARATION: BE READY FOR ANYTHING

Interview confidence comes from preparation, not from personality. When you know your stories, have researched the company, and have practiced answering questions out loud, you walk into every interview ready to be your best self.

## Use Job Descriptions to Predict Interview Questions

Every job description is a roadmap to the questions you will be asked. The required qualifications and responsibilities tell you exactly what the interviewer wants to hear about.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Generate Interview Questions from a Job Description

Here is a job description for a [job title] at [company]: [paste full JD]. Generate 12 behavioral interview questions this hiring manager is likely to ask based on the required competencies and responsibilities listed. For each question, identify which competency it is testing. Then, using my resume [paste], suggest which of my experiences would make the strongest CAR response for each question.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Build a CAR Interview Story

Help me build a CAR interview story. The question is: "Tell me about a time you [specific competency]." Here is the situation I want to use: [describe briefly]. Walk me through structuring this as: Challenge (1 to 2 sentences describing the situation), Action (3 to 4 sentences with specific details about what I did), Result (1 to 2 sentences with a measurable outcome if possible). Make it conversational enough to say out loud in an interview.

## Google NotebookLM: Your Personal Interview Coach

- ▶ Go to [notebooklm.google.com](https://notebooklm.google.com) and create a new notebook.
- ▶ Upload three sources: your resume (PDF), the job description (paste as text), and 2 to 3 pages of company research.

- ▶ Click "Audio Overview" to generate a custom AI podcast.
- ▶ Listen to AI hosts discuss your qualifications, anticipate questions, and analyze your fit.
- ▶ Take notes on insights you had not considered.



**PRO TIP:** NotebookLM is especially powerful for auditory learners. Hearing your story discussed back to you builds confidence and helps you internalize talking points without memorizing a script.

## Free AI Mock Interview Resources

Practicing out loud is the single best way to reduce interview anxiety and sharpen your responses. These tools let you practice anytime, anywhere, with real-time AI feedback:

PLATFORM	FEATURES	COST
Huru AI (huru.ai)	Video mock interviews with AI feedback on content, delivery, and body language. STAR method coaching. Chrome extension.	Free trial available. Premium plans with full feedback.
Interviews.chat	Text and voice mock interviews. Behavioral, technical, and case study practice. Feedback with model answers.	Free tier available.
SmallTalk2Me (smalltalk2.me)	Feedback on grammar, fluency, confidence, and answer quality. Great for ESL students.	Free basic access.
Big Interview (biginterview.com)	Video practice with AI feedback. Curriculum-based learning modules. Often available free through university career centers.	Check with USI Career Success Center for access.
ChatGPT / Claude AI	Ask AI to role-play as an interviewer for a specific company and role. Practice answering and get feedback in real time.	Free tiers available on both platforms.



**PRO TIP:** The best interview prep combines AI practice with human feedback. Use AI tools for repetition and refinement, then book a mock interview appointment at the Career Success Center for personalized coaching.

# KNOW YOUR INTERVIEW FORMAT

## Different Formats, Same Goal: Show Them Who You Are

Not every interview happens in a conference room. In 2026, you are just as likely to interview on your phone, over Zoom, in front of an AI camera, or in a formal panel setting. Each format has its own rules, and the candidates who understand those rules have an immediate advantage.

Format	What to Expect	How to Prepare
<b>Phone Screen</b>	<p>Usually 15–30 minutes with a recruiter or HR representative.</p> <p>Focused on basic qualifications, salary expectations, availability, and initial fit.</p> <p>You cannot rely on body language or visual cues.</p>	<p>Stand up while you talk. It adds energy to your voice.</p> <p>Keep your resume, the job description, and notes in front of you.</p> <p>Smile while you speak. It changes your tone even when they cannot see you.</p> <p>Have a quiet space with good reception ready.</p>
<b>Video (Zoom, Teams, Google Meet)</b>	<p>Can range from 30 minutes to a full panel interview.</p> <p>Interviewers can see your face, background, and body language.</p> <p>Technical issues are common and not held against you if handled professionally.</p>	<p>Camera at eye level. Look at the camera, not the screen, when speaking.</p> <p>Test your audio, video, and internet 24 hours before.</p> <p>Use a clean, well-lit background. Natural light from a window in front of you is ideal.</p> <p>Close all other tabs and silence notifications.</p> <p>Dress fully. You may need to stand up unexpectedly.</p>
<b>In-Person</b>	<p>Typically 30–60 minutes. May include a tour, panel, or sequential interviews.</p> <p>Full visual impression matters: your arrival, handshake, posture, and eye contact.</p> <p>You may meet people not on the original schedule.</p>	<p>Arrive 10–15 minutes early. Know the building, parking, and entrance.</p> <p>Bring 3–5 printed copies of your resume on quality paper.</p> <p>Have a professional bag or portfolio. No phone visible.</p> <p>Make eye contact with everyone in the room, not just the person asking questions.</p> <p>Thank the receptionist and anyone who walks you to the interview room.</p>

<p><b>AI-Conducted (HireVue, Paradox, Spark Hire)</b></p>	<p>One-way recorded video: you answer pre-set questions on camera with no live interviewer.</p> <p>Typically 3–6 questions. You get 30 seconds to prep and up to 3 minutes per response.</p> <p>AI evaluates your word choice, structure, pace, and communication clarity.</p> <p>Used by JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, Deloitte, Microsoft, Amazon, and many others.</p>	<p>Practice recording yourself answering questions on camera before the real thing.</p> <p>Treat it with the same professionalism as a live interview. Dress appropriately.</p> <p>Speak to the camera as if it were a person. Maintain natural eye contact with the lens.</p> <p>Structure every answer using STAR (see below). AI systems are designed to evaluate structured responses.</p> <p>See the full AI interview preparation section later in this guide.</p>
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**PRO TIP**

Regardless of format, three things stay the same: research the company thoroughly, prepare stories using the STAR method, and practice answering out loud. The format changes the setting. Your preparation stays constant.



# THE FIVE TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Know What They Are Really Asking

Every interview question falls into one of five categories. When you can identify the type, you know exactly what the interviewer wants to hear. This is not about memorizing answers. It is about recognizing patterns so you can respond with confidence.

Question Type	What It Sounds Like	What They Are Testing
<b>Behavioral</b>	“Tell me about a time you...”	Past behavior as a predictor of future performance. They want real stories, not hypotheticals. Use STAR.
<b>Situational</b>	“What would you do if...”	Your judgment, problem-solving process, and decision-making under ambiguity. Walk through your thinking step by step.
<b>Technical</b>	“Explain how you would...” or “Walk me through...”	Your knowledge and skills in action. Be specific about tools, methods, and processes you have actually used.
<b>Competency-Based</b>	“Give me an example of your leadership...”	Specific skills mapped to the job description. Review the required qualifications and prepare one story for each.
<b>Conversational</b>	“Tell me about yourself” or “Why this role?”	Communication skills, self-awareness, and genuine interest. Keep answers concise and relevant to the role.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Most interviews use a mix of all five types. Behavioral and situational questions are the most common in 2026 because employers have shifted to skills-based hiring, where they evaluate what you can do rather than where you went to school. When you hear a question, take one second to identify the type before you start talking. That moment of recognition changes everything.

# THE STAR METHOD:

## YOUR ANSWER FRAMEWORK

### Turn Every Experience Into a Compelling Interview Story

The STAR method is the most widely recommended framework for answering behavioral and situational interview questions, and it is the structure AI interview systems like HireVue are specifically designed to evaluate. STAR gives your answers a clear beginning, middle, and end, which is exactly what interviewers are listening for.

If you have been using the CAR method (Challenge, Action, Result) from earlier in this toolkit to build your resume bullets, STAR works the same way with one addition: it separates the Situation from the Task so the interviewer clearly understands both the context and your specific role.

S	<b>Situation</b> 10% of your answer	Set the scene. Where were you? What was happening? Give just enough context for the interviewer to understand the challenge. One to two sentences.
T	<b>Task</b> 10% of your answer	What was your specific responsibility? What were you asked or expected to do? This clarifies your role in the story. One sentence.
A	<b>Action</b> 60–70% of your answer	What did you actually do? Be specific. This is the heart of your answer and where you spend most of your time. Describe your steps, decisions, and leadership.
R	<b>Result</b> 10–20% of your answer	What happened because of your actions? Quantify whenever possible: numbers, percentages, timeframes, feedback. End with what you learned or how it shaped your approach.

## STAR in Action

**Question:** “Tell me about a time you had to manage a tight deadline.”

- S** “During my internship at a marketing agency, a client moved their product launch up by two weeks without warning.”
- T** “I was responsible for the social media campaign and all supporting graphics.”
- A** “I immediately reprioritized my task list, set up a shared project tracker so the team could see progress in real time, broke the deliverables into daily milestones, and coordinated with the design team to batch-produce graphics. I also flagged two deliverables that were unrealistic for the new timeline and proposed alternatives to the client.”
- R** “We launched on the revised date with all core deliverables completed. The campaign reached 40,000 impressions in the first week, exceeding the original target by 15 percent. My manager cited the experience in my performance review as an example of proactive leadership.”

### STAR VS. CAR: WHEN TO USE WHICH

Use CAR (Challenge, Action, Result) for resume bullets and LinkedIn where space is limited. Use STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) in interviews where you are speaking out loud and need to walk the listener through the full story. They are the same framework at different levels of detail.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Build a STAR Interview Story

Help me build a STAR interview story. The question is: “Tell me about a time you [specific competency].” Here is the situation I want to use: [describe briefly]. Walk me through the Situation, Task, Action, and Result structure. Make sure the Action section is the longest and most detailed. Include at least one quantifiable result. Then help me practice saying it out loud in under two minutes.

# YOUR QUESTIONS MATTER: INTERVIEW THE INTERVIEWER

## This Is Not a Formality. It Is Your Chance to Evaluate Them.

When the interviewer says, “Do you have any questions for me?” that is not the end of the interview. It is the beginning of your evaluation of them. This is where you demonstrate genuine interest, strategic thinking, and the kind of curiosity that separates you from every other candidate who says, “No, I think you covered everything.”

Never say you have no questions. Always prepare at least five so you can adapt based on what was covered in the conversation.

## Strong Questions to Ask

Category	Question
Role Clarity	“What does success look like in this role in the first 90 days?”
Team & Culture	“Can you tell me about the team I would be working with and how they collaborate?”
Growth	“What opportunities for professional development does the organization offer?”
Manager Style	“How would you describe your management style and how you give feedback?”
Company Direction	“What are the biggest priorities for the department this year?”
Day-to-Day	“What does a typical week look like for someone in this position?”
AI & Tools	“What tools and technology does the team use day to day, and how is AI being integrated into workflows?”
Next Steps	“What are the next steps in your hiring process, and is there anything else I can provide?”

## RED FLAG AWARENESS

Your questions are also how you spot warning signs. If the interviewer cannot describe the team, avoids questions about management style, or seems surprised by your questions about professional development, that tells you something important. A good employer expects and respects thoughtful questions.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Generate Targeted Questions for Your Interviewer

I am interviewing for a [job title] position at [company name]. Here is the job description: [paste]. Based on this role and company, generate 8 thoughtful questions I could ask the interviewer that demonstrate my research, strategic thinking, and genuine interest in the position. Avoid generic questions. Focus on questions that would help me evaluate whether this role and team are the right fit for me.



# USING AI TO BE IMPACTFUL AND MEMORABLE

## AI Is Your Prep Partner, Not Your Replacement

AI does not replace your preparation. It accelerates it. The candidates who stand out in 2026 are not the ones who memorize perfect answers. They are the ones who walk in with deeper research, sharper stories, and a level of preparation that most candidates do not have time for without AI.

Here is how to use AI strategically at every stage of interview preparation.

### Before the Interview

Strategy	How AI Helps
<b>Predict the questions</b>	Paste the job description into Claude or ChatGPT and ask it to generate 12 behavioral questions based on the required competencies. Then prepare a STAR story for each.
<b>Research the company deeply</b>	Ask AI to summarize the company's recent news, earnings, strategic priorities, and competitors. Go beyond the About page.
<b>Practice out loud</b>	Use AI as a mock interviewer. Ask it to role-play the hiring manager and give you real-time feedback on your STAR structure, specificity, and length.
<b>Sharpen your stories</b>	Paste a rough draft of your STAR answer and ask AI to help you tighten it, add quantifiable results, and cut unnecessary detail.
<b>Prepare your questions</b>	Ask AI to generate interviewer questions based on the job description, company news, and industry trends.
<b>Build confidence with NotebookLM</b>	Upload your resume, the job description, and company research to NotebookLM. Generate an Audio Overview to hear AI hosts discuss your fit and anticipate questions.

### During and After the Interview

AI cannot help you during a live interview, and you should never use AI tools while actively interviewing. But the preparation AI helped you do before the interview is what makes you memorable in the room.

After the interview, AI becomes useful again. Use it to draft your thank-you email (see the next section), debrief on questions you found difficult, and refine your stories for the next round.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Full Mock Interview with Feedback

Act as the hiring manager for a [job title] role at [company name]. Here is the job description: [paste]. Conduct a realistic 30-minute interview with me. Ask one question at a time. Mix behavioral, situational, and conversational questions. After each of my answers, give me specific feedback: Was my STAR structure clear? Did I provide enough detail in the Action step? Did I quantify my Result? Was my answer under two minutes? At the end, give me an overall score and tell me the one thing that would most improve my interview performance.



# WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE ACTUALLY ASKING ABOUT AI IN 2026

## The Questions Most Candidates Do Not See Coming

Here is something most candidates do not expect: employers are already testing your AI literacy, even when the job description does not mention AI. In 2026, an increasing amount of employers evaluate AI capabilities during interviews, but most do it indirectly through standard behavioral and situational questions.

These are the questions showing up across industries right now, along with frameworks for answering each one. Practice these out loud before every interview.

### 1. “How do you use AI in your work or academic life?”

**Why they ask:** This is the new baseline question for 2026. Every industry, every role, every level. They are not testing technical knowledge. They are checking whether you embrace useful technology or resist change.

**Your framework:** Name 2–3 specific tools. Describe one concrete use case. Explain what you still do yourself. Show selectivity, not dependency.

**Try starting with:** “I use AI tools regularly, but I am selective about when they actually help versus when they add unnecessary steps. For example, I use Claude AI to...”

### 2. “Walk me through how you would approach this task. What tools or resources would you use?”

**Why they ask:** This sounds like a standard workflow question, but they are listening for whether AI is part of your process. Candidates who never mention AI seem behind. Candidates who mention only AI seem dependent.

**Your framework:** Describe your process step by step. Integrate AI naturally as one tool among several. Emphasize your judgment as the final filter.

**Try starting with:** “My first step would be to... Once I have that foundation, I would use an AI tool like [name] to... Then I would review and refine the output to make sure it...”

### 3. “Tell me about a time AI gave you a result that was not accurate. How did you handle it?”

**Why they ask:** They want to know if you blindly trust AI output or if you verify, question, and correct. This is the question that separates strategic AI users from careless ones.

**Your framework:** Use STAR. Describe the situation, what went wrong, how you caught the error, and what you did to fix it. Emphasize your critical thinking.

**Try starting with:** “I was using AI to help draft... and I noticed the output included... I verified by... and corrected it before...”

### 4. “How do you decide when to use AI and when not to?”

**Why they ask:** This is the sophistication test. They want to see that you understand AI’s limitations, not just its capabilities. Knowing when not to use AI is as valuable as knowing when to use it.

**Your framework:** Give a clear principle. Provide one example of each: a time AI was the right tool and a time it was not. Show that your judgment, not the tool, drives the decision.

**Try starting with:** “I use AI when I need to process large amounts of information quickly or generate a first draft I can refine. I do not use it when...”

### 5. “How do you make sure your work stays authentic when using AI tools?”

**Why they ask:** Employers are concerned about AI-generated content that sounds generic. They want to hear that you use AI as a starting point, not a finished product, and that your voice and judgment remain central.

**Your framework:** Explain your review process. Describe how you personalize AI output. Emphasize that AI drafts but you decide.

**Try starting with:** “Everything AI helps me create goes through my own editing process. I read it out loud, ask whether it sounds like something I would actually say, and rewrite anything that feels...”

## 6. “If you had access to any AI tool for this role, how would you use it to add value in your first 90 days?”

**Why they ask:** This is a forward-looking question that tests whether you can think strategically about AI in a work context. They want vision, not just competence.

**Your framework:** Connect AI to a specific business need in the role. Show that you would learn the company’s existing tools first. Propose one concrete, realistic application.

**Try starting with:** “In the first few weeks, I would focus on understanding the team’s current workflows and tools. Once I had that context, I would look for opportunities where AI could...”

## 7. “What is your understanding of ethical AI use in a professional setting?”

**Why they ask:** With 21 percent of organizations now using AI to conduct initial interviews and AI-generated resumes becoming increasingly common, employers need to know you use AI responsibly.

**Your framework:** Cover three principles: transparency (disclose when asked), verification (never submit unverified AI output), and privacy (never input confidential data). Connect to your personal practice.

**Try starting with:** “I believe ethical AI use comes down to three things: being honest about how I use it, always verifying what it produces, and protecting sensitive information. In practice, that means I...”

## THE QUESTION BEHIND THE QUESTION

In 2026, many interviewers do not ask about AI directly. They listen for it in your answers to standard questions like “How would you handle a large project with a tight deadline?” or “Describe how you stay organized.” If AI is part of your real workflow, let it show up naturally in these answers. You do not need to force it. But if you never mention AI in any answer, interviewers may wonder whether you are keeping up with how work actually gets done today.

# PREPARING FOR 100% AI INTERVIEWS

## When There Is No Human on the Other Side

A growing number of organizations now use AI platforms like HireVue, Paradox, and Spark Hire to conduct initial interviews with candidates. Platforms like HireVue, Paradox, and Spark Hire record your video responses, and AI evaluates your word choice, structure, pacing, and communication clarity. There is no human watching in real time. Companies including JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, Deloitte, Microsoft, and Amazon use these platforms at scale.

This is a different experience than interviewing with a person. It requires different preparation.

## How AI Interviews Typically Work

**You receive a link by email.** You log in, test your camera and microphone, and the interview begins. A question appears on screen (text or pre-recorded video). You get approximately 30 seconds to think, then up to 3 minutes to record your answer. Most AI interviews include 3 to 6 questions. The whole process takes 20 to 30 minutes.

You typically get one attempt per question, though some platforms allow a single redo. There is no live interviewer to read, no rapport to build, and no follow-up questions. Your answer either communicates your value or it does not.

## Before the Interview

What AI Measures	What This Means for You
<b>Language and keywords</b>	Use terminology from the job description naturally. Do not keyword-stuff. AI evaluates context, not just word count.
<b>Response structure</b>	STAR-formatted answers score higher than unstructured responses. AI systems are designed to recognize this pattern.
<b>Communication clarity</b>	Speak in complete sentences. Avoid filler words (um, like, you know). Pace yourself. Pausing briefly before answering signals confidence.
<b>Pacing and tone</b>	Speak at a conversational pace. Monotone delivery scores lower. Vary your tone naturally as if you were talking to a person across a table.
<b>Relevance and specificity</b>	Generic answers are flagged. Include specific examples, numbers, and details that connect directly to the question asked.

## Your AI Interview Preparation Checklist

- Record yourself answering 5 practice questions on your phone or laptop before the real interview.
- Watch your recordings and check for filler words, eye contact with the camera (not the screen), and pacing.
- Test your technology: camera, microphone, internet speed, and lighting at least 24 hours in advance.
- Set up your space: clean background, camera at eye level, light source in front of you (not behind).
- Dress professionally from head to toe. Treat it exactly like an in-person interview.
- Prepare 5 STAR stories that cover different competencies from the job description.
- Practice your 30-second prep time. When the question appears, take a breath, identify the question type, choose your story, and begin.
- Speak to the camera lens, not the screen. This creates the appearance of natural eye contact.
- Keep answers between 90 seconds and 2 minutes. Concise, structured answers outperform long, rambling ones.
- Close all other applications. Silence your phone. Eliminate every possible distraction.

### IMPORTANT: AI INTERVIEWS ARE NOT LESS SERIOUS

Because there is no human on the other side, some candidates treat AI interviews casually. This is a mistake. These recordings are reviewed by hiring managers after the AI flags top candidates. Your performance in a 20-minute AI interview can determine whether you advance to the next round at companies you want to work for. Prepare for it the same way you would prepare for a face-to-face conversation with the CEO.

## CO-PILOT PROMPT: Prepare for an AI-Conducted Interview

I have an AI-conducted video interview (HireVue or similar platform) for a [job title] position at [company name]. Here is the job description: [paste]. Generate 6 practice questions that are likely to appear on this type of platform, focusing on behavioral and situational questions. For each question, help me draft a STAR-formatted answer that is between 90 seconds and 2 minutes when spoken aloud. Then give me feedback on whether each answer uses specific examples, includes quantifiable results, and avoids filler language.



# POST-INTERVIEW THANK-YOU EMAILS

## Close the Loop, Leave the Impression

The interview does not end when you walk out of the room or close the Zoom window. What you do in the next 24 hours can be the deciding factor between you and another equally qualified candidate. A thoughtful, personalized thank-you email signals professionalism, reinforces your fit, and keeps you top of mind during the hiring decision.

This is not a formality. It is a strategy.

## Why Thank-You Emails Matter

Hiring managers notice who follows up and who does not. A well-crafted thank-you email accomplishes four things:

- ▶ It demonstrates professionalism and follow-through.
- ▶ It reinforces a specific moment from the conversation that connected you to the role.
- ▶ It gives you an opportunity to address anything you wish you had said differently.
- ▶ It keeps your name in the interviewer's inbox during the decision-making window.

## Thank-You Email Best Practices

- ▶ **Send within 24 hours.** Same-day is ideal, especially for competitive roles.
- ▶ **Personalize for each interviewer.** If you interviewed with multiple people, send an individual email to each person, not a copy-paste.
- ▶ **Reference something specific.** Generic messages like "Thank you for your time, I enjoyed learning about the role" are forgettable. Mention a project they described, a value they emphasized, or a challenge they shared that excited you.
- ▶ **Keep it concise.** Three to four short paragraphs is the target. This is not a second cover letter.
- ▶ **Proofread carefully.** A typo in a thank-you email can undo the strong impression you made in person.

- ▶ **Use a professional subject line.** “Thank You — [Your Name], [Position Title] Interview” is clean and searchable.

## Thank-You Email Structure

- ▶ **Paragraph 1 (Gratitude and Specificity):** Thank the interviewer by name. Reference something specific from the conversation that resonated with you or deepened your interest in the role.
- ▶ **Paragraph 2 (Reinforce Your Fit):** Connect one of your qualifications or experiences directly to something discussed in the interview. This is your chance to reinforce the strongest moment of your conversation or to briefly address something you wish you had expanded on.
- ▶ **Paragraph 3 (Forward-Looking Close):** Restate your enthusiasm for the role and the organization. Express your interest in next steps. Keep the tone confident but not presumptuous.

## Sample Thank-You Email

**Subject:** Thank You — Archie Eagle, Marketing Coordinator Interview

Dear Ms. Hernandez,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today about the Marketing Coordinator position. I especially enjoyed our conversation about the team’s upcoming brand refresh initiative and the emphasis your department places on data-driven storytelling.

Our discussion reinforced my confidence that my experience developing content strategies and analyzing engagement metrics during my internship with the alumni engagement office aligns well with the goals you described for this role. I was also glad for the chance to share how I approach balancing creative work with measurable outcomes, which clearly matters to your team.

I am genuinely excited about the opportunity to contribute to your department and to grow alongside a team that values both innovation and precision. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any additional information. I look forward to hearing about next steps.

Warm regards,

Archie Eagle

(812) 555-0101 | aeagle.acct@eagles.usi.edu | linkedin.com/in/archieeagle

## What If You Forgot to Mention Something Important?

The thank-you email is your recovery tool. If you blanked on a question, undersold an experience, or forgot to mention a relevant qualification, you can address it naturally in Paragraph 2. Frame it as a continuation of the conversation, not a correction.

**Example:** “After reflecting on our conversation about team leadership, I also wanted to share that I led a cross-functional project last semester that required coordinating across three student organizations, which gave me additional experience managing competing priorities and deadlines.”

## What If You Interviewed with a Panel?

Send an individual email to each panelist. Each message should reference something specific that person said or asked. This shows attentiveness and respect for everyone’s role in the process. If you did not catch someone’s name or email, it is appropriate to ask your main point of contact or the recruiter for that information.



# AI CO-PILOT PROMPTS FOR THANK-YOU EMAILS

Copy and paste these prompts into Claude AI, ChatGPT, or Microsoft Copilot. Replace the bracketed text with your own details.

## Generate a Draft Based on Your Interview Notes

“Act as a career coach specializing in post-interview communication. I just completed an interview for [job title] at [company name]. The interviewer was [name and title]. During the interview, we discussed [list 2 to 3 specific topics, projects, or moments from the conversation]. I want to reinforce my fit for this role based on my experience in [relevant skill or experience]. Write a professional thank-you email that is warm, specific, and concise. Keep it to 3 short paragraphs. Do not use generic language. Do not fabricate anything I did not mention.”

## Tailor a Thank-You for a Panel Interview

“I interviewed with a panel of [number] people for the [job title] role at [company name]. Here are the names and what each person focused on during the interview: [list each panelist and what they discussed or asked about]. Write a separate thank-you email for each panelist. Each email should reference something specific that person said or asked. Keep each email to 3 short paragraphs. Make each one feel personal, not templated.”

## Recover from a Missed Question or Weak Answer

“During my interview for [job title] at [company name], I was asked about [topic or question] and I feel my answer did not fully capture my experience. Here is what I wish I had said: [describe the experience or point you wanted to make]. Write a thank-you email that naturally incorporates this point in the second paragraph without making it sound like a correction. Keep the tone positive and forward-looking.”

### Adapt Your Thank-You for a Virtual Interview

“I just completed a virtual interview via [Zoom/Teams/phone] for [job title] at [company name]. The interviewer was [name]. We discussed [key topics]. Write a thank-you email that acknowledges the virtual format naturally and reinforces my enthusiasm and fit for this role. Keep it concise and professional.”

### Follow Up After No Response

“I sent a thank-you email after my interview for [job title] at [company name] on [date]. It has been [number] business days and I have not heard back. Write a brief, professional follow-up email that reiterates my interest without sounding desperate or impatient. Keep it to 2 short paragraphs.”

### ETHICAL REMINDER

AI can help you structure and polish your thank-you email, but the specific details must come from you. Only you were in that interview. Only you heard what the interviewer said. Never let AI fabricate conversation details, interviewer quotes, or project names you did not actually discuss. Write your notes immediately after every interview so you have accurate material to work from.



# NETWORKING AND FINDING MENTORS

Networking is not about collecting business cards or sending mass LinkedIn requests. It is about building genuine professional relationships with people who can support your growth and whose growth you can support in return. The most important skill in networking is curiosity. Ask good questions. Listen. Follow up.

## How to Network Strategically

- ▶ Start with who you already know: professors, supervisors, family friends, classmates, alumni.
- ▶ Expand intentionally: use X-ray searches to find professionals in your target companies and roles. View on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/UdLGukk7Z1I>
- ▶ Attend events: career fairs, professional association meetings (like EHRA and SHRM), alumni events, and industry webinars.
- ▶ Follow up within 48 hours of meeting someone. Reference something specific from your conversation.
- ▶ Maintain your network: check in every 2 to 3 months. Share articles. Congratulate people on milestones. Be visible.

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Write a LinkedIn Connection Request

I want to connect with [person's name/title] at [company]. I found them through [career fair, X-ray search, alumni network, class speaker]. Write a personalized LinkedIn connection request under 300 characters that mentions something specific about their background and explains why I am reaching out. Tone: genuine, respectful, and professional.

## Mentor Match at USI and Steppingblocks

USI students have access to two tools worth using throughout your job search. USI Mentor Match connects you with alumni who can offer resume feedback, career advice, and industry insight on a one-time or ongoing basis. USI Steppingblocks is a data platform that shows real outcomes from USI graduates including job titles, employers, salaries, and the skills your target field actually requires.

- **Access Mentor Match through Career Launch. For additional information email Maggie Carnahan, [macarnahan@usi.edu](mailto:macarnahan@usi.edu).**
- **Browse potential alumni mentors by industry, major, location, or career company on USI's platform Steppingblocks: <https://usi.stepsblocks.com/login>.**
- **Schedule informational interviews, ask for advice, and build a relationship over time.**
- **Mentorship is a two-way street. Come prepared with questions, follow up with gratitude, and share your progress.**

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Prepare for a Mentor Meeting

I am meeting with a mentor who works as a [their role] at [their company]. I am a [your major/year] student interested in [career goal]. Help me prepare: (1) 5 thoughtful questions to ask that go beyond "How did you get your job?" (2) A 30-second introduction of who I am and what I am exploring, (3) A follow-up email template I can send within 24 hours after our conversation.



# HOW TO SHOWCASE YOUR AI SKILLS

AI literacy is now a workforce competency. Employers across every industry want to know that you can use these tools strategically and ethically. Here is how to talk about your AI skills on your resume, in interviews, on LinkedIn, and in cover letters.

## On Your Resume (Skills Section)

**AI and Career Technology:** Claude AI, ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google NotebookLM, Jobscan (ATS Optimization), Boolean Search Operators, Google Alerts, SEO Strategy, Canva

## On Your Resume (Bullet Points)

- ▶ **Example:** "Leveraged AI-powered tools including Jobscan and Claude AI to optimize resume targeting, achieving 85%+ ATS keyword match rates across 12 applications."
- ▶ **Example:** "Utilized Boolean search operators and Google X-ray searches to identify 15+ industry professionals, expanding professional network by 40%."

## In an Interview

### CO-PILOT PROMPT: Sample Answer: "How do you use AI?"

"I use AI as a co-pilot, not a replacement for my own thinking. For example, I use Claude AI to help brainstorm ideas, refine my writing, and analyze job descriptions for keywords. But I always review, personalize, and fact-check everything. I see AI as a tool that accelerates my process while I bring the critical thinking, creativity, and authenticity that AI cannot replicate. Nothing replaces the human voice."

## On LinkedIn (About Section)

- ▶ **Example:** "I combine strategic career planning with AI-powered tools to approach every opportunity with intention and precision. From ATS-optimized resumes to data-driven networking, I believe in using every resource available to find the right fit, not just any fit."

## In a Cover Letter

- ▶ **Example:** "My approach to [relevant task] reflects the same data-driven mindset I bring to everything I do. I regularly leverage AI-powered tools to analyze information, identify patterns, and optimize outcomes, skills I am eager to apply to [specific aspect of the role]."

# CAREER READINESS RESOURCES

These are curated resources from leading career development organizations, top university career centers, and trusted industry platforms. Bookmark these and return to them throughout your career journey.

## Companion Guides from Leading University Career Centers

These guides offer in-depth formatting examples, sample resumes, CVs, cover letters, action verb lists, and transferable skills worksheets. Use them alongside this AI Co-Pilot Toolkit for a complete career readiness foundation.

### Princeton University Center for Career Development: Resume Guide

Includes introductory and advanced resume worksheets, the ACE method (Action + Context + End Result) for writing bullet points, a transferable skills checklist, a comprehensive action verbs list organized by category, sample resumes for early college, mid-college, industry-focused, and research-oriented students, and a helpful headers reference.

[Resume\\_Guide.pdf](#)

### Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences: CVs and Cover Letters

Includes CV formatting guidance for graduate students and doctoral candidates, multiple real CV samples across disciplines (art history, political science, neuroscience, biotech R&D), annotated academic cover letter samples with commentary explaining what works and why, cover letter templates for faculty positions, postdocs, and liberal arts colleges, and an action verbs list organized by function.

[GSAS: CVs and Cover Letters](#)

These are the formatting and sample foundations. Your AI Co-Pilot Career Toolkit is the strategy layer that shows you how to optimize those documents for ATS, SEO, LinkedIn, and the 2026 job market using AI-powered tools.

## USI Career Success Center

- ▶ Book an appointment through Career Launch (USI's scheduling platform)
- ▶ Mentor Match & Steppingblocks: Connect with USI alumni and community professionals
- ▶ Career fairs, employer info sessions, and on-campus recruiting events
- ▶ Resume reviews, mock interviews, and career coaching

## Professional Organizations and Industry Resources

- ▶ SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management): [shrm.org](https://shrm.org), Career resources, certifications, and workforce readiness tools
- ▶ NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers): [naceweb.org](https://naceweb.org), Career readiness competencies, salary data, and benchmarks
- ▶ Jobscan: [jobscan.co](https://jobscan.co), Free ATS resume optimization scanner
- ▶ Indeed Career Guide: [indeed.com/career-advice](https://indeed.com/career-advice), Resume templates, interview tips, salary research, and job search strategies
- ▶ LinkedIn Learning: [linkedin.com/learning](https://linkedin.com/learning), Free with many library cards. Courses on career development, AI tools, and professional skills
- ▶ Microsoft Copilot Guides: [copilot.microsoft.com](https://copilot.microsoft.com), Tutorials for using AI within Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel
- ▶ O\*NET OnLine: [onetonline.org](https://onetonline.org), Career exploration, skills profiles, and labor market data by occupation
- ▶ Google NotebookLM: [notebooklm.google.com](https://notebooklm.google.com), Free AI-powered research and interview prep tool

## Top University Career Center Resources (Open Access)

- ▶ Harvard Office of Career Services: [ocs.fas.harvard.edu](https://ocs.fas.harvard.edu), Resume and cover letter guides, industry-specific resources
- ▶ Stanford Career Education: [beam.stanford.edu](https://beam.stanford.edu), Career planning worksheets, networking guides, industry overviews
- ▶ MIT Career Advising and Professional Development: [capd.mit.edu](https://capd.mit.edu), Resume and CV guides, STEM-specific career planning
- ▶ Yale Office of Career Strategy: [ocs.yale.edu](https://ocs.yale.edu), Resumes, CVs, cover letters, and career exploration resources
- ▶ University of Michigan Career Center: [careercenter.umich.edu](https://careercenter.umich.edu), Comprehensive career guides, job search strategies, and interview preparation
- ▶ Columbia Center for Career Education: [cce.columbia.edu](https://cce.columbia.edu), Industry guides, networking strategy, and professional development resources

## AI Tools Quick Links

- ▶ Claude AI: [claude.ai](https://claude.ai)
- ▶ ChatGPT: [chat.openai.com](https://chat.openai.com)
- ▶ Microsoft Copilot: [copilot.microsoft.com](https://copilot.microsoft.com)
- ▶ Google NotebookLM: [notebooklm.google.com](https://notebooklm.google.com)
- ▶ Jobscan: [jobscan.co](https://jobscan.co)
- ▶ Canva: [canva.com](https://canva.com)
- ▶ Google Alerts: [google.com/alerts](https://google.com/alerts)
- ▶ Huru AI (Mock Interviews): [huru.ai](https://huru.ai)
- ▶ Interviews.chat: [interviews.chat](https://interviews.chat)

# YOUR NEXT STEPS:

## CAREER READINESS CHECKLIST

Use this checklist after every Career Success Center appointment to keep building momentum. Check off each item as you complete it. Every step moves you closer to career readiness.

### Foundation

- Define or refine your personal brand statement
- Identify your unique value proposition
- Craft your "Tell Me About Yourself" response

### Resume and Cover Letter

- Run the plain text test on your resume
- Format your resume using ATS best practices
- Write CAR method bullet points for every experience
- Use Jobscan to check your keyword match rate (aim for 70%+)
- Draft a targeted cover letter for your top-choice employer

### LinkedIn

- Collect 6 to 10 job descriptions and identify your SEO keywords
- Optimize your LinkedIn headline with target keywords
- Rewrite your About section for SEO and authenticity
- Update your Experience section with keyword-rich descriptions
- Add AI tools to your Skills section

## Job Search

- Set up 3 to 5 Google Alerts for target jobs and companies
- Practice one Boolean search on Google or LinkedIn
- Try one Google X-ray search to find a networking contact
- Create your job search tracker spreadsheet
- Review the ATS systems list and identify which ATS your target employers use

## Interview and Networking

- Generate interview questions from a target job description
- Build 3 to 5 CAR stories for common behavioral questions
- Upload your materials to Google NotebookLM for audio interview prep
- Complete one AI mock interview (Huru, Interviews.chat, or SmallTalk2Me)
- Send one personalized LinkedIn connection request
- Send a personalized thank-you email within 24 hours of every interview
- Draft thank-you emails using the AI Co-Pilot prompts and personalize before sending
- Explore Mentor Match for a USI alumni mentor
- Practice answering 3 of the 7 AI interview questions out loud
- Complete the AI interview preparation checklist before any HireVue or recorded interview

## AI Skills

- Practice writing high-impact prompts using the 5-Part Formula
- Add AI tools to your resume Skills section
- Practice answering "How do you use AI?" out loud
- Review and adjust privacy settings on your AI platforms

## Keep Going

- Schedule your next Career Success Center appointment

# YOU ARE AI CAREER READY.

Here Is What That Means in 2026.

## THE 2026 REALITY

The job market you are entering is not the one your parents navigated.

**45%** of employers describe the 2026 hiring outlook for new graduates as fair, not strong.

**76%** of professionals planning to job search this year say they do not feel prepared.

**45%** of U.S. employees have used AI at work, yet only 10% use AI regularly today.

## You are no longer in that majority.

If you have worked through this guide, you now have skills that most candidates, including experienced professionals, have not developed.

- ✓ Reverse-engineer job descriptions to identify the exact keywords algorithms and recruiters search for
- ✓ Build ATS-optimized resumes that survive the technology filter and land in human hands
- ✓ Craft AI prompts that produce targeted, strategic career documents while keeping your authentic voice
- ✓ Optimize a LinkedIn profile so recruiters find you before you find them
- ✓ Use Boolean operators, Google X-ray searches, and data-driven networking to uncover hidden opportunities
- ✓ Prepare for interviews with AI-generated questions, audio coaching, and the CAR method
- ✓ Write thank-you emails that reinforce your fit and keep you top of mind
- ✓ Talk about your AI skills with confidence, honesty, and the ethical framework employers respect

In a job market that increasingly rewards skills over credentials, **you can name yours.**

In a workforce where AI literacy is becoming a baseline expectation, **you have it.**

In a hiring landscape where 70% of employers now use skills-based hiring for entry-level roles, **you can demonstrate what you know how to do.**

**Sources:** NACE Job Outlook 2026 Survey, National Association of Colleges and Employers, November 2025. LinkedIn Jobs on the Rise 2026, LinkedIn/Censuswide, January 2026 (19,113 professionals surveyed globally). Gallup Workforce Survey, Q3 2025 (23,068 U.S. employees surveyed).

These are not just job search techniques.  
These are workforce readiness competencies.  
**And they belong to you.**



# READY TO TAKE THIS FURTHER? TAKE GENS 401.

This toolkit gave you the knowledge. **GENS 401** gives you the practice.

## GENS 401: AI-Enhanced Career Readiness

1 credit hour | Online | 7 weeks | Undergraduate Juniors & Seniors

Select an actual target job posting and use it as your anchor throughout the entire course. Over 7 weeks, you will:

- ✓ Build your professional brand statement
- ✓ Explore career paths using AI and O\*NET
- ✓ Develop an ATS-ready resume and validate it with Jobscan
- ✓ Optimize your LinkedIn profile for SEO and recruiter visibility
- ✓ Create a strategic networking plan
- ✓ Develop critical AI literacy and ethical decision-making skills
- ✓ Walk away with a complete, polished career portfolio you can use immediately

Every skill in this toolkit comes to life in GENS 401. The difference is that you are not working alone. You have structured modules, weekly assignments that build on each other, and the support of career professionals who helped create this guide.

**If this toolkit is the playbook, GENS 401 is the practice field.**

Ask your advisor about enrolling, or contact the Career Success Center for more information.

### **AI did not do this for you. You did.**

AI was your co-pilot. You were the driver.  
Every decision, every revision, every word that made it onto your resume  
and your LinkedIn profile came through your judgment.

### **That is something no algorithm can replace.**

Keep this guide. Come back to it before every application, every interview, and every career move.  
And when you land the role you have been working toward,  
**know that it was not luck. It was preparation, strategy, and you.**

The USI Career Success Center is here for every step.

**Schedule your next appointment through Career Launch!**

