



Guide

to Starting a Green Career in
New York City



A Note from the Author

When I first moved to New York to start my career in the green building industry, I came thinking that I would easily be able to find a position within a few weeks. As a holder of a master's degree, a former Peace Corps volunteer, speaker of four languages, and someone with several years of international teaching experience, I came with the idea that non-profit organizations would be *simply delighted* to hire me.

As the months wore on with no interviews and the balance in my bank account dwindling, I learned several hard lessons about the reality of searching for a job in the sustainability field in New York City. It is incredibly difficult, requires a high level of dedication and persistence, and when you finally do begin to succeed, there is nothing more gratifying. Frank Sinatra was right when he sang about New York, "If I can make it here, I can make it anywhere."

I have learned a tremendous amount in the process of my own job search, much of which was through trial and error. GreenHomeNYC has also been an invaluable resource for me; I never would have gotten my foot in the door if it wasn't for the connections that I made in the organization. The technical workshops have helped me to develop immensely as a professional as well. It is my hope that this manual can help you avoid many of the pitfalls associated with the job search and make it a much easier and productive experience, finally leading to landing a position you love.

Samantha Yost
GreenHomeNYC, Green Careers Committee

Special Thanks

to Celia Currin and John Crant for contributing to the content and editing of this guide



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1 INTRODUCTION



What is GreenHomeNYC?

A community-oriented, volunteer-run organization, GHNYC's mission is to facilitate the adoption of sustainable building methods and materials by owners of small residential and commercial buildings in New York City.

GHNYC hosts monthly events in career development, forums, and tours of sustainable buildings. For more information, visit our website at:

greenhomenyc.org

The Job Hunt: Common Misconceptions

Searching for a job requires a highly proactive approach, but it's worth mentioning a few common pitfalls that people make when searching for employment. The following are some common misconceptions that people may have when beginning their search:

I have an advanced degree, so I will have no problem finding a job.

Many people think that the strength of their academic experience is enough to get them at least an entry-level job. However, potential employers are often far more interested in your previous professional experience and any technical skills that you bring to the table.

I found several great positions on Idealist or Indeed that I'm perfectly qualified or over-qualified for. I'll be a shoo-in.

It's worth saying this early and often: Sending in resumes for positions on job boards such as Idealist and Indeed does not guarantee an interview or even a reply. Although they are useful to find out what organizations have open positions, hiring managers say that it's not uncommon to receive two to three hundred resumes for a single position, and some more attractive positions can get up to a thousand! Even if you think that you are well-qualified for a position that you see online, you should manage your expectations. It's never a good plan to base your job search solely on submitting your resume "cold" for positions on job boards — building your professional network and making connections in your industry is often a much more important component of the job search.

I need a job, but I should be able to find something in a few weeks.

Searching for an entry-level job in New York often takes several months, not weeks. Depending on the strength of your past experience and professional connections (See Section 4: “Networking”), it is prudent to expect your job search to last anywhere between two to eight months, or potentially even longer. Also keep in mind that searching for a job is a full-time occupation in itself – it is difficult to work a 40-hour week and still have the energy to go to networking events, volunteer, and still keep an eye out for open positions. Before you begin your job search, make sure that you are prepared financially for a period of un- or underemployment.

I am a sustainability professional

In today’s market, sustainability is fast becoming the industry standard. Gone are the days of the “sustainability professional” – today’s professionals are usually expected to have a technical expertise as well as an eye on sustainability. In most cases, employers are not looking for generalists, but rather somebody who can do a particular technical skill – such as an architect, data analyst, or landscaper, but do it in an environmental, socially-conscious, and cost-effective way.

If you have a generalist degree, such as Environmental Studies or Urban Studies, it doesn’t mean that it will be impossible to find employment. It may be necessary though to do some internships or temp assignments in order to gain some concrete technical skills and make professional connections before you can expect to get a full-time position in the field.

A GreenHomeNYC Success Story: Katie Schwamb



What do you currently do?

I'm a Sustainability Consultant at Steven Winter Associates. My work focuses on managing new construction, multifamily residential projects that are seeking a sustainability certification, such as LEED for Home or Enterprise Green Communities, and that are often pursuing incentive funds or financial support through the City or State by meeting energy efficiency metrics.

How did you break into the industry?

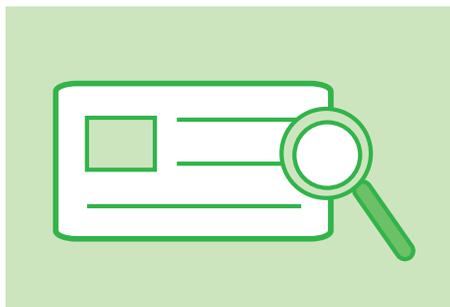
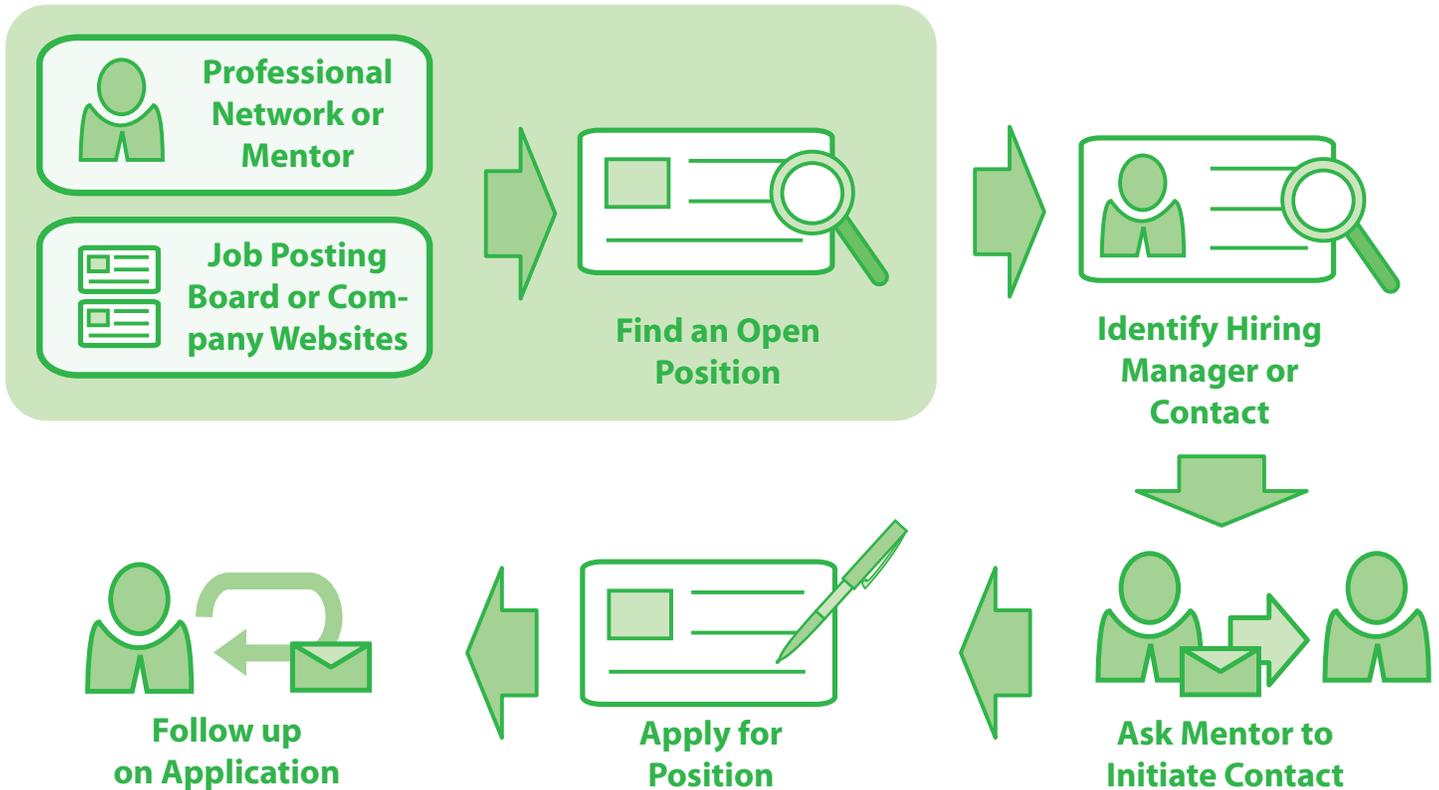
When I first moved to NYC, I wanted to build a personal and professional community for myself. I started by looking into different organizations and events that piqued my interest, including those focused on sustainability and the built environment. Getting involved in extracurricular activities allowed me to meet different emerging and seasoned professionals in the industry. Ultimately, it was my volunteer work with GreenHomeNYC that connected me to my current position. If I hadn't been an active volunteer with the Green Careers group and if I hadn't attended one of the monthly meet-ups, I wouldn't have been able to connect with my current colleagues or the head of the company. Sometimes you get lucky and a casual conversation turns into a future job recommendation or chance meeting turns into an impromptu informational interview. Even if it doesn't happen the very next day, the connections you make with people today are what will help you in the future.

What advice you might have for entry-level job seekers?

First of all, looking for a job is often a full time job in itself. That's something with which I had to come to terms. Also, when I first began applying for jobs, it was very easy to feel productive simply from submitting a resume and cover letter for an open position. I would pat myself on the back and then wait for my phone to ring. I quickly learned that you can't sit on your laurels. Just because you applied for a position, does not guarantee an interview or even a follow-up email from the potential employer. Mark down on your calendar when you submitted an application and when you should follow-up again if you don't hear anything back. Then, move on to the next job posting, or even better, the next lecture series, volunteer meeting or networking event. And on a final note, stay active and pay it forward. Even if you're lucky enough to land that position of your dreams, keep attending events and keep making and maintaining those connections.

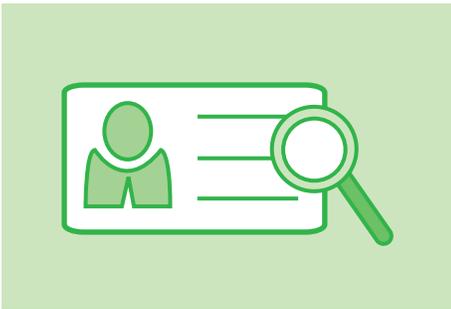
2 THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

Searching for a job can be deceptively complex. It is important to remember that most hiring managers will not consider your application out of the pile of other resumes that they receive. There are many ways to make your application stand out from the rest.



Find an Open Position

Although it is typically not effective to use online job boards to submit an application, they can be useful for identifying open positions in which you might be interested. Conversely, mine your professional contacts or mentors (See Section 4, “Networking” for more information on finding a professional mentor) to see if they have any inside knowledge on available positions.

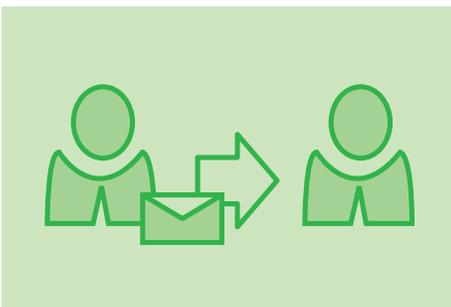


Identify Hiring Manager or Contact

Identifying the person who will be receiving your application will allow you to target your communications to a specific person. Smaller organizations typically post lists of their staff on their websites. Often, the contact person listed on the resume is not the hiring manager, and it is important to pinpoint this person if possible. Once you identify the person via LinkedIn or the company website, their e-mail can often be found with a little persistent Googling.

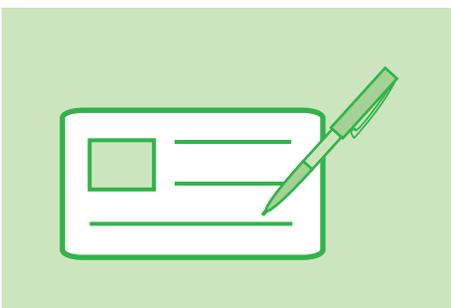
Additionally, ask those within your professional network if they have any contacts in the target company. They can often use an introduction for you as an excuse to cultivate a network relationship of their own. Even if this contact is not the hiring manager, they can still serve as a vital link to the organization.

Your 2nd level contacts on LinkedIn can be helpful to identify people to reach out to. When you have found somebody as a 2nd level connection, reach out to the mutual contact and ask them for an introduction.



Ask Mentor to Initiate Contact

Having a mentor or advocate to recommend you for a position is vitally important and often makes the difference between getting an interview or not. If your mentor knows anyone specifically at that organization, ask them to initiate contact and THEN submit your resume. If not, you can request that they send a recommendation to the hiring manager right after you send in your application. To respect your advocate's time, it is a nice gesture to write out an example recommendation that they can use as a template.



Apply for the Position

When your mentor has made contact, complete the application process as directed on the posting. In the first line or two of your e-mail, reference the person who made the original contact. Read the instructions carefully to include all necessary components of the application. For help developing a resume and cover letter, see Section 3, "Resumes and Cover Letters."



Follow up on Application

After an appropriate timeframe — typically about one business week — follow up with your contact if you haven't received a response. It can also be helpful if your mentor follows up as well on your behalf. Due to the large volume of applications they receive, most hiring managers specifically request no calls, but a polite e-mail can sometimes remind them to take the time to check out your application.



Know When to Move On

Sometimes, even if you think you are perfectly qualified for a position, it just isn't meant to be. It could be that the organization is already planning on promoting internally but is posting from due diligence, or they could be looking for somebody different than what is sounds like on the job posting. This is why it's important to never put all of your expectations into one position — even if you think you are perfect for a position, you should always keep an eye open for other openings.

If you do make it to the interview stage and they decide to go in a different direction, it is perfectly acceptable to ask why they did not chose you. This can be a valuable source of feedback and way to manage your expectations as you apply to different positions later.

Informational Interviews

Because the job search in NYC is so competitive, there are a few extra steps in the process that might not exist for someone looking for a job in a more relaxed environment. One of those essential steps is the informational interview, which many young job seekers are unfamiliar with.

In an informational interview, although you should treat it as seriously as a job interview, you should never directly ask for a job. Generally speaking, they are a tool for people working for one company to find out more about organizations in whom they have a professional interest. It is however acceptable to inquire if there are any open positions at their organization or to ask them to keep you in mind if something does open up. These contacts can lead to extremely valuable connections, so work to impress during these interviews!

You may be surprised at how many people will take time out of their busy schedules to talk to you a little about their company or their industry. Identify several people who work in the field you are interested in and request a meeting, even if you have never had any previous contact. LinkedIn is a great way to find new contacts with whom to request an interview.

Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview:

- » How did you get started in this industry?
- » What do you like about your work? What is difficult about it?
- » What advice would you give someone who is trying to break into this industry?
- » Can you give me the contact info for three people that I can follow up with after this interview?

Before the interview, make sure to prepare by learning as much about the company as you can from their website. Ask them questions about things that can't just be found online so that the conversation will be more dynamic than them simply repeating the company's public selling points. Look up your interviewee as well on LinkedIn and see what their previous experience is. Try to find some common ground, even if it doesn't relate to your professional experience, such as having the same alma mater, having both volunteered with the same organization, or being involved with a professional group such as GreenHomeNYC.

Informational Interviews: DOs and DON'Ts

DO 

...send them a link to your LinkedIn profile so they can get to know your background before they meet you.

DON'T 

...give them a copy of your resume unless they ask for it, as this is not a job interview. You can bring a copy with you or send it afterward if they request.

DO 

...come to the interview dressed well, as you would to a regular interview. If it is going to be at a less formal location such as a café, than dress business casual.

DON'T 

...forget to send a polite thank you and a follow-up e-mail about whatever you discussed.

DO 

...give them a business card, even if it's just your personal info. Even though they already have your contact information, it could be helpful for them to pass along to a colleague they promised to put you in touch with.

Get Certified

Having a certification such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or BPI (Building Performance Institute) will not guarantee you a job, but it is a strong signal to a potential employer that you are committed to the field. For many positions in the green building industry specifically, one of these certifications is almost mandatory.

LEED Accreditations

There are three levels to LEED accreditation:

- » **Green Associate:** The first step, which focuses on familiarizing the professional with the entire LEED system
- » **LEED AP:** A specialization within one particular field (for example, operations and management, building design and construction, or homes)
- » **LEED fellow:** Means that you've made significant contributions to the green building field over your career.

REMEMBER:

In LEED, terminology is important. People are ACCREDITED and buildings are CERTIFIED. Some hiring managers have been known to disregard applicants who confuse the two.



Other Certifications

LEED is not the only accreditation in the green industry. The following may also be worth pursuing depending on your chosen career track:

- » **Building Performance Institute (BPI):** Focuses on specific mechanical building systems
- » **Passive House (PHIUS):** A hyper-efficient building standard. This and Energy Net-Zero are becoming increasingly popular in New York City
- » **North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP):** For professionals interested in solar installation
- » Energy Analyst Certifications:
 - **Home Energy Rating System (HERS)**
 - **Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) Certified Energy Auditor (CEA)**
 - **AEE Certified Energy Manager (CEM)**

REMEMBER:

Studying for an exam can also be a great opportunity to build your network. If you decide to take a class to prepare, stay connected with your cohorts and follow their professional development carefully. Chances are, you're going to be looking for the same kind of work and they may be useful contacts in the future.

Volunteers help turn over compost at a Gowanus Canal Conservancy "Clean and Green" volunteer event



Volunteering

Another great way to get plugged in is to volunteer somewhere with any of the hundreds of sustainability non-profit organizations in the city. Volunteering is an excellent way to not only make some great professional contacts, but a way to gain some practical, hands-on experience as well.

If you are coming to the city without any prior connections or experience, volunteering is likely to be a requirement before you can find full-time employment. Volunteer experience in your field looks excellent on a resume and can help cover experience gaps, so make the most out of your accomplishments.

Volunteering for Green Home is one of the best ways of getting plugged in to the sustainability industry in the city. For more information on volunteering with Green Home, contact Tad Kroll at tad@greenhomenyc.org

3 RESUMES & COVER LETTERS



GHNYC's annual "Speed Up-Dating your Resume" workshop allows job searchers to get feedback on their resumes from several industry professionals.

There are three items that make up a hiring manager's initial impression of you as a candidate: your resume, cover letter and the e-mail that contains them.

- » **E-mail (or "Cover Note"):** Often an afterthought behind the resume and cover letter, this important message is the first time that a potential employer will be exposed to you and your personality. Before they will have even opened your resume and cover letter, they will have formed a snap judgment about you based solely on how and what you write in this e-mail.
- » **Resume:** Research shows that most hiring managers take an average of just 6 seconds to review each resume that passes their desk.¹ In that six seconds, you have to convince them that you're a good fit for the job, so a good visual layout and a few key pieces of information are crucial.
- » **Cover Letter:** Your cover letter is usually read last and only in the event that the person reviewing your application has decided from your e-mail and resume that you might be a good fit. Consequently, you should write your cover letter from a position of knowing that you already passed the first "test." Your cover letter is a chance to show off your strengths as much as possible.

Initial E-mail

This actual text of this message will likely just be skimmed over, so it is important to make relevant details as easily accessible as possible.

Subject Line

The subject line is a vital part of your e-mail, so do not use something generic like "Application." Include your name, the position to which you are applying, and if somebody referred you, their name. For example:

Elizabeth Henrickson - Program Associate Position, referred by Ellen Masters

Elizabeth Henrickson - Program Associate, 2 years non-profit experience

¹ <http://cdn.theladders.net/static/images/basicSite/pdfs/TheLadders-EyeTracking-StudyC2.pdf>

Content

The text of your message should be short, clear, concise, and include a few key elements:

- » How you found the open position and if you were referred by anyone
- » What key experience you have that qualifies you for the position. These should be very brief or in bullet form — your resume and cover letter will provide more details
- » Signature with your contact information
- » An expression of gratitude— Studies show that including an expression of gratitude, such as thanking the recipient for their time, can double the chance of receiving a reply to any given message.¹
- » What you can do to make their lives easier. Emphasize the value you can bring to their organization, not to your own career.

Elizabeth Goldman, Program Assistant - Referred by Martin Keller

My supervisor Martin Kalick from Wells Group introduced me to the open program assistant position with Zeller, Inc. as he believes that I could be a great fit there. After reading the description, I knew that it was an excellent chance for me to bring value to the great work that you're already doing in the field. I have:

- » 1 year experience as a program associate
- » Provided quality administrative support
- » Experience with ArcGIS and AUTOCAD
- » Master's degree in Urban Planning from CUNY

Please find my resume and cover letter attached. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to discussing the position with you further.

Regards,
Elizabeth Goldman
(555) 945-7452
elizabeth.goldman@gmail.com



REMEMBER:

Double- and triple-check to make sure that you have actually attached both your resume and cover letter to your e-mail!

http://www.umkc.edu/facultyombuds/documents/grant_gino_jpsp_2010.pdf

Andy Padian’s “Top 10 Ways to Make Your Resume Suck”

- 1) Name the file “Resume” so we can’t distinguish it from the 300 others with the same name.
- 2) Send it as a .docx file instead of a PDF, so that other people can edit it to their hearts’ content
- 3) List your education above your experience as if being more impressed with where you went to school is more important than your actual experience
- 4) Use a boring typeface with enormous margins and lots of white space
- 5) Don’t let anyone else proofread or make suggestions on how to improve your resume
- 6) Don’t include a section at the beginning saying who you are and what your career goals are
- 7) Use twenty bullet points to talk about *absolutely everything* you did at a job, rather than summarizing the relevant parts using three or four bullets
- 8) Make us think that your responsibilities were limited solely to going to meetings, taking notes, and playing Candy Crush by not using action verbs such as administered, managed, supervised, budgeted, organized, or prioritized.
- 9) Make your resume sound like an obituary, rather than expressing how bright, creative, or likable you are
- 10) Leave huge gaps in your history and put your interests as “travel”, so that everybody knows you’ll be out of there in 6 months, tops

Content used with permission

Resumes

The single most essential item of a job application, it is good advice to never be satisfied with your resume. Continue to update and improve it and, most importantly, get others to look it over and give you their critical feedback.

What it Should Include

- » **Your name:** Followed by any major professional certifications
- » **Basic contact information:** Such as telephone, e-mail address, LinkedIn profile, and city of residence. You may want to withhold your full address for security reasons.
- » **Professional Objective or Summary:** This should give a broad overview of how you see your career trajectory. For example, do you see yourself working with non-profits? Do you have a strong focus in your field? You may also choose to take a sentence or two to explain your strengths and what sets you apart from other professionals.
- » **Professional Experience:** Only include professional experience that is relevant to the position you are applying for. You do not need to include service-level or temporary jobs unless they complement the narrative that you are trying to present. Explain any conspicuous gaps in your employment history.
 - Include the name of your position, the years you worked there, your job title, where you were based, a summary description, and 2-4 bullet points about your accomplishments.
 - Use qualitative figures to back up your accomplishments, such as “submitted 12 RFP responses” or “managed \$5 million fund”
- » **Education:** Unless you have no relevant professional experience, it is best to put this after the jobs you’ve previously held.
- » **Certifications and Publications:** If you hold any professional certifications (See: *The Job Search Process*, “Get Certified”), add them here along with any publications you may have done.
- » **Skills:** Include relevant software skills such as MS Office, Adobe Creative Suite, or industry-specific software such as Arc GIS or AutoCAD. If you speak another language, put them here along with your level of fluency.

Differences between a Resume and Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Although the words “resume” and “CV” are often used interchangeably in the United States, in many foreign countries (especially in Europe), employers expect something quite different. Employers in other countries may expect:

- » A headshot next to your name
- » More than one page of content
- » Much more detail about your responsibilities in each job

Layout and Design

- » Unless you are seeking an upper management position, only use one page for your resume. Use a visually attractive balance of white space to text—avoid both extremes of “the wall of text” and appearing that you don’t have enough experience to fill a page.

<p><Company> <Date Range> <Job Title> <Location of job></p> <p>Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job.</p> <p>Inefficient</p>	<p><Company> – <Job Title>, <Location> <Date Range></p> <p>Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job. Description of job.</p> <p>Efficient <i>Using too many line breaks is an inefficient use of white space.</i></p>
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- » If appropriate, selectively use a dark color such as navy blue or hunter green for some elements, such as your name, or headers. This will make your resume a little more visually interesting.
- » Use a professional, visually-appealing typeface. Do not use “fun” or overused typefaces. Avoid using more than two different typefaces in the entire document. Use **bold** or *italics* to highlight important information, but do not overuse them.

Over-used:

Times New Roman
Ariel
Courier

Unprofessional:

Papyrus
Comic Sans MS
Brush Script
Impact
Lobster

Good Suggestions:

Calibri
Cambria
Garamond
Helvetica Neue
Avenir
Verdana

What Employers Look at in the 6 Seconds They Have Your Resume

Research shows that hiring managers spend on average just 6 seconds reviewing your resume. Here is what they look at in those 6 seconds:

- » Your name
- » Current company and position
- » Start and end date of your current position
- » Previous positions and dates
- » Education
- » Professional Certifications

Because you have such a short amount of time to leave a good impression, make sure that these elements paint a clear picture of who you are and that you retain a clear visual hierarchy.

Use narrow margins to reduce white space and allow you to fit more content on the page

Allow as little white space on the page as possible

Gregory Nathaniel Thomas, LEED Green Associate

Brooklyn, NY 11215 • (917) • @gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

An ambitious project manager currently pursuing career advancement in the solar energy industry. Highly skilled at learning and adapting to new technologies, problem solving, and multitasking. Proven ability to communicate effectively and work well with individuals at all levels across an organization, obtain excellent results with strict time constraints, and maintain diligence to task as well as a keen eye for detail. Excels at building positive, productive, and trusting relationships.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Sunrun Inc., Valley Cottage, NY 2014 – Present

Project Planner

Diligent conductor of solar photovoltaic construction projects between contract signing and construction phases, that is responsible of all project tasks, maintaining the branch installation schedule and customer management. Process changes and improvements within the project planner, order management, and regional sales functions. Reports & spreadsheets to support the coordination and tracking of project tasks within NY & NJ branches. Project planners within operating region.

Openmind Financial LLC, Uniondale, NY 2011 – 2014

Junior Project Manager

Adaptable manager of software development projects focused on analyzing, improving, and streamlining management and reporting processes for the Endur/Findur Product Development group through 2013 and the Product Development department through 2014.

- ◆ Administered work flow, allowing for better resource and project forecasting.
- ◆ Managed high-level projects for major existing clients as well as sales initiatives for potential clients.
- ◆ Created and maintained automated reports and processes that reduced manual effort, provided critical performance metrics and assisted strategic decision-making.

Sterling Floor Designs, Ltd., Commack, NY 2010 – 2011

Assistant Project Manager

Detail-oriented manager of flooring projects across several major builder and property management accounts as well as conducting the majority of field measurements.

- ◆ Participated in bi-weekly company production meetings and represented the company at weekly builder job site meetings.
- ◆ Conducted pre- and post-installation quality control inspections of projects in conjunction with labor managers.

Steve & Barry's LLC, Port Washington, NY 2007-2008

Project & Program Manager, IT Program Management Office

Dedicated manager responsible for the work flow of the Business Intelligence (BI) group in New York and Mumbai, administering two major software packages, and training co-workers to use a sophisticated project management application.

- ◆ Led daily conference call between BI counterparts in NY and Mumbai to prioritize work and discuss major issues.
- ◆ Discovered more effective ways to administer the BI report production system, saving the team an hour of labor weekly.

ACCREDITATIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Associate June 2014
Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI)

Photovoltaic (PV) Entry Level Exam – Passing Score Achievement April 2014
North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP)

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

GreenHomeNYC, New York, NY – Volunteer January 2014 to Present
Facilitate monthly forums for audiences of over fifty people. Participate in volunteer coordination meetings.

Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA), Boston, MA – Volunteer, Member January 2014 to Present
Supported the organization and running of speaker sessions as well as attendee registration, at the Building Energy 14 conference.

EDUCATION

Yale University, New Haven, CT 2003 - 2007
Bachelor of Science, Engineering Sciences (Chemical)

SKILLS

- ◆ Microsoft Office Suite – Excel, Project, Access, Word, SharePoint, Outlook, PowerPoint, Lync
- ◆ Experienced in a variety of computer programs – CA Clarity PPM, Oracle, Salesforce, Google Apps, Skype, Join.me

Include your city of residence. Many organizations are not willing to hire non-local candidates

Summarize relevant accomplishments with just a few concise bullets

Include any relevant non-professional experience as well

Cover Letters

If the hiring manager who is reviewing your application has made it to your cover letter, it means that they were impressed enough with the credentials on your resume to take the time to explore you further as a candidate. Although your resume may have been “all about the facts,” your cover letter is your chance to convince them why you would be a good fit for the position. Think of it as your first job interview, and should you be selected for an in-person interview, it is quite likely that the person speaking with you will familiarize themselves with the details of your cover letter.

Cover Letter Checklist:

- Less than a page
- Clear, concise, and easy to read
- Tone sounds confident and not groveling
- Laid out in a visually appealing way
- 100% free of typos and errors
- Tailored specifically to respond to the needs presented in the job description
- Offers added value to your resume instead of just rephrasing the same information
- The file is saved in PDF format and includes your name and position being applied for

Structure

The typical cover letter is divided into three distinct parts:

- » An introduction in which you state why you are interested in the position. If somebody referred you to the position, you should mention it here.
- » State the skills and experience you have that qualify you for the position. Include your professional accomplishments, using numbers and statistics to back them up whenever possible.
 - Emphasize what *value* you bring to the table. How have you increased an organization’s profitability, improve their efficiency, or increase their productivity?
 - When speaking about past accomplishments, frame them in terms of *problems solved*. State what the need was (e.g. “When I was hired, the project I was overseeing had already gone far over budget...”) and then how you solved it (“Within a few months I had turned it around, and delivered the final project on time and under budget”).
- » Conclude by restating your interest and letting the reader know that you are available for an in-person interview.

“What is your Salary Expectation?”

Generally do not volunteer your salary expectation unless the position description explicitly states that applications not including a salary expectation will not be considered. If you absolutely must answer this question:

- » Do your research. Glassdoor.com is a good resource to figure out what the average pay is for your desired position at that and other organizations.
- » If you are still not sure, a good rule of thumb is to take your walk-away salary level and add 10-15% on top of that. So, if \$40k is the absolute minimum that you would accept, you would ask for \$44-46k.

Tips for Writing an Effective Cover Letter

DO

- » Add a salutation only if you know to whom you are writing — otherwise, it may be safely omitted.
- » Start with an opening line that expresses your interest in the position
- » Keep it under a page and keep the language simple
- » Show, don't tell.
- » Focus more on your experience than trainings or degrees. Recruiters want to know if you can do the job, not if you went to an expensive school.
- » If appropriate, include information that makes you seem personable and has some connection (e.g. mentioning that you love kayaking on the Hudson when applying at an environmental non-profit)
- » Describe your accomplishments in ways that show how your employers benefited. Did you save them money? Raise their profits?
- » Triple- and quadruple-check for typos and grammar errors. Get someone else to read it over if possible
- » You can save time by reusing much of the content for each application, but every cover letter should be unique. Mention the company name in the body so they know it is not a form letter.
- » Use confident language such as “I am qualified”
- » Be clear and concise. Phrase things so that people who are skimming your letter can understand what you're saying.

DON'T

- » Use general salutations such as “To whom it may concern”
- » Start with “My name is...” Chances are the reader already knows your name by this point
- » Fill it with long, complicated words and jargon
- » Say things like “I have leadership skills” without saying why and giving concrete examples
- » Focus on how prestigious your degree is or which letters you've managed to amass behind your name
- » Talk about your thriving social life, favorite sports teams, or other entirely irrelevant topics.
- » Speak of your accomplishments in terms of how it advanced your own professional development
- » Fire it off without carefully reading through it a several times. Small errors are easy to miss when you wrote them!
- » Reuse the exact same letter for each application you send
- » Use qualifiers such as “I believe I am qualified”
- » Get bogged down in business-speak like, “I actualize the potentiality of synergistic outcomes”

4 NETWORKING

Where to Find Networking Opportunities

Although GreenHomeNYC is an excellent source for networking, there are many other opportunities to build your professional network. These following suggestions are an excellent place to start:

- » **Green Drinks** typically hosts an event every month
- » Search **Eventbrite** and **Meetups** for any events related to “green” or “sustainable”
 - The **Be Social Change** Meetup is particularly active for sustainability-related events
- » The **Events** page for organizations like Urban Green Council, Building Energy Exchange, or Impact Hub NYC
- » Hyperakt features monthly **Lunch Talks**, similar to the TED Talk format
- » The NYC Parks **Events** page contains numerous no- or low-cost activities and volunteer opportunities across the five boroughs
- » The **Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA)** is an excellent resource to meet like-minded professionals and attend conferences such as the annual Building Energy conferences in New York and Boston.



Green Home NYC Events are an invaluable way to network with like-minded professionals in the sustainability field.

Business Cards

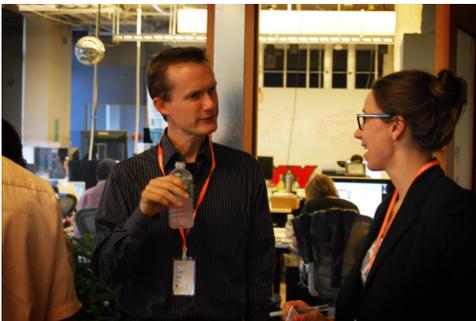
Business cards are an important part of the networking process. After meeting any new connection in your industry, it is a good idea to give them a business card so they can follow up with you later if they would like. Jotting down a quick note to remind them of who you are and what you were talking about is an excellent way to ensure that they remember you.

Do not throw away “old” business cards. You never know when they will come in handy.



REMEMBER:

If you are caught without a business card, don't trust your memory to remember your new contact! Instead, ask if you can connect with them right now using the LinkedIn mobile app, or write their contact in your phone.



One of the most popular Green Home events is an elevator pitch workshop, where participants can practice developing and delivering their personalized pitches.

Elevator Pitch

Although you may be hard pressed to find anybody who has used their so-called “elevator pitch” in an actual elevator, being able to describe yourself and what you do clearly and concisely is an essential part of networking.

- » Write down your pitch and practice saying it to yourself and to others before you using it in a “live fire” situation. Never stop improving and refining your pitch!
- » Keep it to 20 seconds or less. After that, people’s attention will start to waver. Avoid technical jargon when speaking with laypeople.
- » What is your professional experience? How long have you been working in the field?
- » How do you know the person you are speaking with or the organization they represent?

“I’ve been with Enterprise Community Partners for about a year. We’re a non-profit organization that focuses on affordable housing, and I work with climate resilience on apartment buildings — so making sure that the next Sandy doesn’t do as much damage to low-income housing. My background is in environmental science, so I’m very interested in that side of the housing industry. In fact, I’m really interested in the work that your company is doing on envelope efficiency, especially in situations where a building may have lost power during an emergency.”

LinkedIn

An expertly crafted LinkedIn profile is essential in the New York market. Many hiring managers who are interested in your resume will then find your LinkedIn profile. As this is likely to be the first time they see a picture of you, it is important to have a meticulously crafted page with a strong visual representation of your skills and experience and who you are as a person. As most people will not spend the time to read all of the details on your profile, how it *appears* is often far more important than the actual content.

Profile Picture and Primary Details

The image shows a LinkedIn profile for Gita Nandan. A red box highlights her profile picture, with a callout box stating: "If you want to be contacted, you can add your email address in your tagline without it being automatically removed by LinkedIn." Another red box highlights her tagline "Architect and educator", with a callout box stating: "Having a large number of connections indicates that you have taken the time to get well-connected in the industry." A third red box highlights her connection count "500+", with a callout box stating: "Having a large number of connections indicates that you have taken the time to get well-connected in the industry." Below the profile picture, the name "gita nandan" is displayed, followed by "Architect and educator" in a red box. Below that, it says "thread collective LLC. • University of California, Berkeley" and "Greater New York City Area • 500+ &". A blue "Message" button is visible. Below the profile information, a snippet of text reads: "Ms. Nandan believes in sustainability as a holistic and supple design approach, integral to all aspects of design and construction. She is at the forefront of sustainability in New York, having served in various roles, most rec... [See more](#)".

Research indicates that when meeting somebody new, people make snap character judgments based on a person's appearance within 1/10th of a second.¹ Consequently, a great profile picture is a must. Use a close-up, well-lit headshot that captures your professional image. Although it does not necessarily need to be taken by a professional photographer, it should be a high-quality picture.

Do NOT use: Selfies, out-of-focus shots, grainy shots in low light, pictures that do not show your face. Not having a profile picture is not an option

¹ "Snap Judgments Decide a Face's Character, Psychologist Finds." Princeton University. <https://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S15/62/69K40/index.xml?section=topstories>

Summary

Do not skip this important part of your profile! Similarly to a cover letter, this section offers you the chance to show that you are well-written, likeable, and creative.

The summary is a chance to show that you are an interesting person “behind the statistics.” All the information on LinkedIn can be overwhelming, so this is the place to put in a personal touch.

Recommendations

Try to get a recommendation for each position that you have listed on your profile. Even if people don’t read them, they are a powerful visual statement that other people have enjoyed working with you in the past.

E-mail former supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates and politely ask if they would be interested in writing a recommendation for you. Many people are also happy to give you a recommendation, so long as you do the work of writing it, so you will likely get a better response if you include a pre-written recommendation as a suggestion.

This feature is also a good way to build up good will in your industry. Take a moment to write out honest, personal recommendations for those you have enjoyed working with in the past.

»

Recommendations Ask to be recommended

Received (4) Given (0)



Jennifer Marrapese
Executive Director at
Northeast Sustainable
Energy Association
November 22, 2013, Jennifer
worked with Jim but at different
companies

I worked with Jim in his role as a volunteer and board member for GreenHomeNYC. In that capacity, Jim went "above and beyond" in helping us promote the BuildingEnergy NYC Conference. He was adept at using social media to amplify the promotion we did from NESEA HQ, and helpful in identifying and reaching out to new audiences. As a result of his effective collaboration with NESEA's communications manager, we were able to double attendance to the conference in just one year.



Jason Fernbach
Jason D. Fernbach, Attorney
at Law
November 24, 2010, Jason
managed Jim directly

Jim is highly intelligent, well spoken and a pleasure to work with. He is detailed oriented and always provided insightful analysis of real estate issues. I have no hesitation recommending Jim.

View 2 more recommendations ▼

Mentors

Having a professional mentor is one of the most vital steps of the job search process — there is no amount of resumes that you can send out that will match the effectiveness of having someone who has already “made it” in the industry looking out for you and making recommendations on your behalf. Some of the benefits to having a mentor include having:

- » Somebody to vouch for you to potential employers
- » Better “inside” access to open positions that might not be public yet
- » Somebody to look over your resume and cover letter to suggest improvements
- » Access to networking opportunities that you might not have had otherwise
- » Advice on what direction you should take for the next step in your professional career
- » An advocate and the comfort of knowing that it is not just “You vs. New York” in your job search



Finding a Mentor

It is worth noting that people don’t typically “find” mentors in the sense that you may be thinking, like asking professionals on LinkedIn, “Will you be my mentor?” In fact, it is rare for a mentor relationship to be strictly defined as such. Typically, these professional relationships grow organically, meaning that it can often be difficult to know where to start.

Firstly, you must be proactive. Do your research within your professional network and identify some individuals that you believe would be a good fit for you as a mentor. This is somebody who has professional connections in the field you are interested in and has demonstrated that they are a leader in their field.

Secondly, get to know these people organically, rather than spamming random professionals on LinkedIn. Interact with them at networking groups, follow them on social media, interact with the content they publish, and — when you believe it is appropriate — ask them if they would be available to meet with you one-on-one over a coffee.

Not every mentor relationship that you pursue will work out. You may have great rapport with some and with others not.

How to Make yourself an Attractive “Mentee”

- » **Remember that mentorship is a two-way street.** You are not the only one who should benefit from the arrangement. Introduce your mentor to other people in your network, share interesting articles with them, or pass along job opportunities that they may be interested in sharing with others
- » **Be engaged and active with professional “extracurriculars”,** such as networking events, volunteering, and attending conferences. Proving that you are committed to the industry will signal that you are worth investing time in as a professional
- » **Be incredibly good at what you do.** Always strive to be the best of the best in your field. Someone is much more likely to take you under their wing if they see the potential for excellence in you.
- » **Be real.** A common mistake is to be overly deferential to people in your field who are “above” you professionally. However, this can hinder the development of an organic relationship. Just be yourself!
- » **Respect their time, but also don’t be afraid to use them as a resource.** If you e-mail them about something and they do not respond, do not assume that they are no longer interested in speaking with you. Sometimes people just get busy and don’t answer your e-mails.

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