

THE EXPAT'S GUIDE TO FINDING A JOB IN  
THE U.S.



**JOB  
SEARCH  
GUIDE**



**FRENCH AMERICAN  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Chicago

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# INTRODUCTION

The French American Chamber of Commerce (FACC) Chicago's Professional Mentoring Committee is pleased to share our new U.S. Job Search Guide. We created this Guide to offer experience, support, and insight to French expat professionals entering the job market in the United States.

The objectives of this Guide are to help prepare you for a job search in the U.S. and to make your transition to the American workplace culture as smooth as possible. In these sections you will find critical information on U.S. employment law, guidance on updating your CV, advice on building your LinkedIn profile, tips on effective networking, and insight into the all-American skill of selling yourself.

The Guide contributors are French or multi-national professionals who have lived and worked on both sides of the Atlantic and experienced workplace cultures different from their own.

We hope you will find these pages useful. Please don't hesitate to [contact us](#) with questions or feedback.

Good luck!

FACC Chicago Team

# BASICS OF U.S. EMPLOYMENT LAW

If this is the first time you're looking for a job in the United States, you may not be familiar with the core principles that govern the employer/employee relationship in this country. The goal of this summary is to give you an overview of the main characteristics of the U.S. labor environment. We hope that this will allow you to approach your job search with realistic expectations and a better understanding of the U.S. work environment.

The U.S. approaches the employment relationship in a completely different manner than the rest of the world. This leads a lot of foreigners to believe that the U.S. labor market is not heavily regulated. This could not be further from the truth. There are probably more labor laws in the U.S. than in France. Why? Primarily because the U.S. has adopted a federalist system of government. Labor laws are enacted at the federal, state, county and even city levels! Federal laws typically provide for a minimum level of protection against unsafe and unfair work conditions. States, counties, and municipalities have the freedom to enact laws that are more generous than Federal laws, and there exist significant differences among local regulations. Therefore, your legal rights, as an employee in the U.S., will in part depend on the state and the city where you work.

Having many laws does not necessarily mean that the system is protective of employees. Overall, the U.S. labor law system is complex but less protective than the legal systems of most developed countries.

So, what does that mean for you, if you get a job in the United States? This means that if you have been working in France or in Japan for example, you may have to adjust your expectations. Indeed, there are a lot of job opportunities in the U.S. but, as an employee, you are not entitled, by law, to either (I) job security or (II) generous benefits. Labor laws provide you with a minimum of protection against unsafe and discriminatory treatment. The rest, for the most part, is up to your employer.

## 1. Job Security

### **“At-Will” Employment is the Norm in the U.S.**

In most developed and developing countries, an employee cannot be terminated without compensation unless the employer has a good reason to do so. The United States is an oddity in that respect: in all but one state (Montana), employment is presumed “at-will”. At-will employment means that the employee and the employer can freely terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause. No reason, no severance payment or advanced notice needs to be given. This is the norm. There are a couple of categories of employees who are not employed at-will in the United States, but they represent a small minority of the U.S. population: C-Level positions and union workers.

### **Exceptions to the At-Will Employment**

- C-Level Positions: Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and other high-level positions that report directly to the board of directors of the company are referred to here as “C” level positions. Most C-level executive are employed “at-will” but a minority of them negotiate a written employment contract that gives them job security for a set number of years. In that case, the company cannot terminate the executive unless it has a good reason to do so or if the company compensates the executive financially.
- Unionized workers also benefit from some level of job security. But the union membership rate in the United States is lower than in most European countries. According to the US labor of statistics, in 2019, the union membership rate in the country represented only 10.3 percent of U.S. workers.

So, unless you are pursuing an executive or unionized position, you will most likely be employed “at-will”.

## Limits to At-Will Employment

Does the “at-will” rule mean that your employer can terminate you for any reason? No, it means that your employer can terminate you for any reason that is not illegal. To simplify greatly, it is generally illegal for employers to terminate an employee because they belong to a minority group that the law deems deserving of protection from discrimination. For example, it is illegal to terminate someone for reasons that are associated with their race, age, disability, pregnancy, national origin, sexual orientation, just to name a few of the so-called “protected classes.”

It is also illegal for employers to retaliate by terminating an employee who complained about illegal discrimination in the workplace.

## 2. Benefits

If you have only worked in France up until now, this may come as a shock to you: in the United States, employee benefits (such as vacations, leave and health care) are, for the most part, at the discretion of your employer. And usually, employers only offer benefits to full-time employees. So, before you accept a position, you need to inquire about the benefits package that is being offered by the company in terms of:

**Vacations:** unlike in France, there is no legal requirement in the United States for companies to grant paid vacations to their employees. Of course, companies want to attract talent and offer paid time off. A minority of companies are even following the lead of tech companies such as Netflix and offer “unlimited vacations policy” but this remains a tiny portion of companies at this point. On average, U.S. companies offer between 10 and 20 days of paid vacation per year, often based on how long you work for the company.

**Holidays**<sup>1</sup>: in American English, the term “holiday” refers to these days that are celebrated either for religious or for commemorative reasons. Most companies recognize about 10 holidays each year.

The most common ones are New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr.’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

**Sick leave**: up until recently, there were no federal or local laws that obligated private employers to pay an employee who was out sick, unless the condition was work-related. In the last decade, an increasing number of local laws have been enacted to force employers to grant a few days of sick leave per year. But do not expect much: 5-7 days on average per year. This means that, unless your employer has decided to be more generous than legally required, your employer may not have to pay you if you are out sick for several weeks<sup>2</sup>.

**Parental leave**: another oddity of the U.S. labor system is its approach to parental leave. The United States is one of the only countries in the world and the only OECD member that has not passed federal laws requiring businesses to offer paid maternity leave to their employees. As we noted earlier, states and municipalities often enact labor laws that are more generous than federal laws. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go in that area. As of December 2020, only 4 states mandate paid family leave and/or disability insurance, and only in certain circumstances. As a result, your chances of having access to maternity or paternity leave will usually depend on the internal parental leave policy of your employer.

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<sup>1</sup> In British English, paid time off for recreational purposes is referred to as “holidays” – in American English, it is referred to as “vacations.”

<sup>2</sup> An emergency federal law has been passed in 2020 to force private employers to provide paid family leave for absences associated with Covid-19, but this is a temporary law: [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#)

**Health Care:** most developed countries have adopted some form of universal health care system. Not the United States. Most U.S. workers obtain their health insurance coverage through their employer's group insurance because it is significantly cheaper than purchasing it individually on the health care insurance market. Some employers pay a portion of the health care premiums, encouraged by tax incentives. But many companies simply deduct the premiums from the employee's paycheck, without contributing anything.

Tip: for all these reasons, once you've made some progress in the interview process, it is legitimate and important that you inquire about the benefits that you would get if you joined the company. This is the only way for you to fully assess the offer that is being made to you.



# GUIDELINES FOR CREATING A U.S.-STYLE CV

1. **Do not include PERSONAL information** such as date of birth, age, marital status, kids, country of origin... Nothing that could potentially be the grounds for discrimination protected by law.
2. **Do not include a photo.**
3. **Avoid complex layouts** with tables/colors -> there is a high probability your resume will be read by a software so the simpler, the better – WORD format is ideal but PDF looks nicer.
4. **Include your name in the resume title:** jane doe resume 2020.pdf is much better than resumeversionfinale.pdf.
5. You can include your hobbies, but it is not common to see them on resumes. Instead, emphasize sports if you have competitive experience (being on a team, playing competitively) AND/OR community involvement (volunteering for a cause, a project).
6. List your **higher levels of education** only. No one cares about high school or “prepa” if you have a bachelor’s degree or a master’s degree.
7. **Translate your French degree** as much as possible into “American” terminology/equivalence. Favor the degree first and put the university or school second, even if it is well known in France: chances are no one knows it here.
8. **Describe the companies you worked for.** It will help the reader understand your profile better. Even large French corporations might not be known here. Even in the U.S., it is good practice to describe each company with one or two sentences.

9. Most resumes will fit on **two pages**: better to have two pages well-spaced than to try to fit everything on one page. Three pages are acceptable for someone with significant experience.
  
10. If you have different angles in your profile and want to look for different types of jobs, you can have several versions of your resume that will emphasize different aspects of your experience in the summary and in the description of your achievements.

You can find two examples in the annex part at the end of the book to give you an idea of how your resume should look in terms of layout. Feel free to use different fonts.

# BUILDING & OPTIMIZING YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

LinkedIn is a very powerful tool for networking. Your profile is your personal brand so it should look professional and be kept up to date.

Here are some tips on how to create and optimize your LinkedIn profile.

## Profile Photo

- It's important to include a photo of yourself. People like to know what you look like and it reassures them that this is a "real" profile.
- Photo should be clear, in focus and professional looking. It doesn't have to be taken by a photographer, but this isn't the place to use a "fun" photo of yourself.

**Fun Fact:** Including a Photo gets you 21 times more profile views and makes you 36 times more likely to receive a message. (Source: Ovations Digital).

## Descriptive Headline

- Be concise and keep it focused on WHAT you do.

## Banner Behind Your Profile Picture

Banner image should relate to what you do and visually showcase your professional identity.



## “About” Section:

- Include an overall summary of your experience with specific skills listed in bullet point format.
- If you have your own company, include your company website.

### About

Michelle A. Imbro is the founder and CEO of World Marketing Partners which helps small to midsize international food and beverage brands market and sell throughout the global marketplace. Considered a game changer in the world of business and marketing, Michelle brings to her clients over 20 years of marketing experience growing brands and leading teams in the food and beverage industry, CPG, durable goods and pharma.

She excels at identifying unique opportunities to build and scale businesses. From assessing feasibility and designing high-level marketing strategies to sourcing talent and building robust teams, Michelle is recognized for both her business and leadership acumen. Her experience with premier shopper marketing agencies and their clients includes :

Shopper/retail marketing

Retail shop design

Global product innovation and marketing

Brand and customer analysis

## Experience:

- Connect your positions to your organization’s page so the logo is displayed next to your name.
- Include company name, position, location and length of employment. If you’ve had a few roles within the same company, list them as separate positions and include details.
- List your professional experience; include your responsibilities but keep it simple and be brief.
- Be consistent across all sections with formatting.
- In your past experience, lead with RESULTS and DATA.

**Fun Fact:** Listing five or more skills gets 31 times more views (Source: Ovations Digital)



## IN Marketing Services

4 yrs

### Vice President Client Services

Feb 2014 – Dec 2016 · 2 yrs 11 mos

Chicago, IL

\*Account lead for the Hillshire/Tyson shopper marketing business, oversee operations and functionality of the business

\*Manage cross functional team of 25 people and ensure work is on strategy initiate new thinking/innovation to projects

\*Lead strategic development of national shopper scale platforms leveraging the Tyson portfolio aimed at driving sales during “key winning seasons” as well as micro-occasions throughout the year

Institute annual Shopper Marketing conference to educate teams including brand teams on new shopper marketing items and understand brand vision for upcoming planning cycle

\*Secure strategic partnerships/properties for Tyson programs providing full shopper experience

\*Mentored High Performing Employees on understanding and being able to act on the bigger picture for client & agency

## Education

- List your most recent education first, even if it’s not from a formal institution.

### Education



**Coaches Training Institute (CTI)**  
Certified Professional Co-Active Coach  
2019



**Sacred Heart University**  
MBA, Marketing  
1999 – 2002



**UCONN**  
Bachelor's of Science, Human Development & Family Relations; Concentration Business Administration

## Certifications & Licenses

- List all certifications and licenses separately.
- Include a logo of the organization that you received the certification/license from.
- Include the date you received your certification/license and when it expires if at all.

## Licenses & certifications



### Associate Certified Coach (ACC)

International Coach Federation  
Issued Jul 2019 · No Expiration Date

See credential

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### Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (CPCAC)

Coaches Training Institute (CTI)  
Issued Apr 2019 · No Expiration Date

## Community Service and /or Volunteer Experience

- Include as many sections as possible. It's important for people to see the "full" you!
- Include activities outside of your employment. It shows that you do more than just work.
- Include a short description if possible. If not, listing the activity is fine.

## Endorsement and Recommendations

Have colleagues give you a recommendation that speaks to your skill set and how well you performed on a project; include how well you worked with others, if they would hire you in the future, etc. Have them speak to the full person and not just one specific task.

## Groups to Follow

Follow groups that are relevant to your experience and industry.

## Interests

- Include organizations that interest you both personally AND professionally.
- They don't all have to be business related. Include ones that show the "full you". This demonstrates that you're not all business and have other interests outside the office.


## How To Maximize Your Profile (Source: Ovations Digital)

- Write and publish AT LEAST 1 LinkedIn Article
  - Is there anything you've written that you could include and publish as an article? This helps establish you as a thought leader.
  - Include imagery to support posts. Stock photography is fine.
  - Include relevant hashtags.
- Posts: Do at least one or two posts per week.
  - Include 1-2 lines of commentary of your own so you're not always coming across as you're selling something but instead being a thought leader.
  - Typical posts include trends, or issues relevant to your industry.
  - Include imagery to support posts. Stock photography is good.
  - Include relevant hashtags.

### Example of Post for Thought Leadership:



## Example of Post Meant to Attract New Client

 **Michelle A. Imbro**  
World Marketing Partners, LLC  
1yr · 🌐

CAUTION ⚠️ New **#technology** isn't always going to be the answer to your **#productivity** issues at **#work!**

With more **#pressure** to be productive, higher expectations, and less time for work, asking your **#team** to learn a new, complex **#tool** on their own can be incredibly **#stressful**.

And increasingly, it can lead to something called **#TECHNOSTRESS** - negative symptoms directly related to the use and adoption of new technologies.

As a **#manager** you want your team to do their best. And that means making sure they have all the tools they need. Unfortunately, that new calendar **#app**, communication tool, or project management **#software** might be causing more harm than good.

Have you ever thought about technostress? Do you suffer from it?

I would love to hear your thoughts!

> I work with people who are having **#challenges** in their **#career** or **#personal** life to help them understand the root cause of the **#problem** and develop an action plan to move forward. If you would like to talk about your needs, rates and budget - write me in PM and we can set up a virtual coffee! <



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share    ✉️ Send

👤 202 views of your post in the 'feed'



## Build Your Network

- Connect with as many relevant people as possible.
  - Connections include colleagues, employees, vendors, friends, etc.
- If you have a good connection, search within their network to connect with others.
- You do not have to accept all invitations. Be selective and remember that you are giving them access to your network. They most likely will use your name when connecting to others in your network so make sure you're ok with this connection.
- Connection Goals (Source: Ovation Digital):
  - 500+ connections for non-Executive level
  - CEO's should have 1k+ connections

# ORGANIZING YOUR JOB SEARCH

Looking for a job takes time and can be a tedious task without a proper job search strategy.

Before going through each of the following steps, let's look at the facts: between 70 and 85% people ended up in their current position thanks to networking<sup>3</sup>. So, make sure you spend at least 70% of your time building and leveraging a team of people (your network) that will help you land your dream job!

Now, let's go step by step:

## 1. Know what you want (and write it down!)

The first and most important part of your job search is to figure out what kind of job you want (and don't want!). Here are a few questions to guide you through this process:

- Which position(s) are you interested in?
- Where? Which city(ies)? How far/often from your home are you ready to travel?
- What type of job? Full-time, part-time, freelance, on-site, remote or a combination of on-site and remote?
- What type of company do you want to work for? A nonprofit, an agency, a firm in a specific industry, a large corporation, a small company, etc...
- Do you need your future employer to sponsor your visa?

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/new-survey-reveals-85-all-jobs-filled-via-networking-lou-adler/>

Now that you found the answers to each question, write down your job search goals, share them with some people closest to you to get their feedback and make sure they align with your skill set, experience, values, ambition and your family constraints. At the end of this process, you must feel confident explaining your goals to people you don't know (yet).

## **2. Make (and update!) a list of target companies**

Now that you have clarified your job search goals, make a list of potential employers that can help you reach this goal. A simple Google search like “companies in city X in YYY industry” is a good place to start.

LinkedIn also has great search functionalities: For example, you can filter job postings according to the city you live in and/or the type of positions you are looking for to discover which companies are currently hiring in your area of interest.

But, consider also more focused job boards to help narrow your search and provide better results. Find out if there are job boards geared towards your industry or specific jobs. Or consider using job sites that focus on freelance or remote jobs if that's what you are looking for<sup>4</sup>.

Your list of targeted companies might be especially narrow if you need a visa sponsorship. Only 1 out of 16 employers in the U.S. hire international people and sponsor their work visa, so you should focus on them. Good news: There are also specific job boards to find sponsoring companies<sup>5</sup>.

Your list of targeted companies must be dynamic and updated regularly, this is your compass to navigate your networking and job search journey!

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.flexijobs.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://usponsorme.com/fr/> (in French) or <https://usponsorme.com/en/> (in English)

### **3. Have your resume, cover letter and portfolio ready and customize them!**

A well formatted resume for the U.S. market (see relevant chapter in this guide) won't be enough to give you the best chance that your job application is read by actual people!

Many companies now use Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to filter qualified and non-qualified candidates. Make sure you include in your resume keywords that are relevant to your title and industry in any online application and follow the formatting instructions<sup>6</sup>.

If you make it past the ATS and your application is in front of human eyes, the hiring manager will be looking for signs that you researched the company and that you are truly interested in this role. Include reasons why you want to work at this company and in this position. Tell them what they will stand to gain if they hire you.

Depending on the type of role you are seeking, having samples of your work might be requested. If appropriate, you can build your portfolio with links to articles you have written, screenshots of a project you have completed, a report you compiled, a video you created, etc... Portfolios can be a personal website, a splash page such as about.me, or even a section in your LinkedIn profile.

### **4. Build your support team through networking**

For job seekers, networking is NOT trying to meet as many people as possible. It's about meeting a few well-connected people, your support team, who can

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.workitdaily.com/applicant-tracking-system-ranking>

vouch for your ability and who are willing to refer you to a few other well-connected people.

Start with your closest circles (family members, friends, former colleagues/clients, sports mates...) and present your job search objectives to them. Do they know anybody in the industry/city you are interested in or somebody doing similar jobs?

Can they introduce them to you? You will be surprised by the high level of answers you get through these personal referrals!

You can use the same strategy with your LinkedIn contacts: use LinkedIn filters to identify your first- and second-degree contacts working at a company you are targeting.

You can also reach out to someone via LinkedIn or email for an informational interview. That may sound intimidating, but it does not have to be. It's a unique way to expand your network and potentially meet with people working at your targeted company. An informational interview is NOT a time to ask someone for a recommendation or a job, it is 20 or 30 minutes to sit down for a cup of coffee (virtual or not) to know more about their job or company.

To make networking even more effective, be sure to investigate industry events and professional associations that align more closely with your skill set. These events (virtual or not) are often held on a regular basis allowing a more natural way to network since you'll see people regularly and not just at a one-time event. Also, you are more likely to find people already familiar with your skill set and with job opportunities in this particular industry.

## 5. Follow up your progress

Use simple templates to track your contacts and applications:

**Job search dashboard:** A simple one-pager with the logos of your targeted companies. Use a visual legend to follow the level of contacts you have at a specific company (see example below).

Add date here

Add industry here

Consulting firms



Example

Add industry here

Add industry here

Legend

- Interview landed or planned
- Contacted via network
- No contact yet
- Job offer identified & CV sent
- Negative answer received

**Job application dashboard:** A simple table to track your different applications (see template below).

Job Title	Company	Link to job offer	Application process	Internal recommendation	Interview date	Follow up

## 6. Conclusion and takeaways:

A successful job search strategy is diverse but focused: Make sure you balance your time well between online applications and networking. Keep in mind that the latter is the most effective and can be used to increase the success rate of your actual applications.

When you do apply online, prefer quality to quantity: apply only to job applications that correspond to your goals and with a customized resume and cover letter.

Before filing a job application, use your network to identify a contact inside the company you can talk to know more about the company and the position, and if possible, refer you to the hiring manager.

Don't be afraid to adapt or fine-tune your goals to your targeted job market: The more you expand your network, the more you will understand the job market in your targeted ecosystem.

# TIPS FOR NETWORKING IN THE U.S.

As mentioned in the previous section, 70% to 85% of job offers in the U.S. are filled through networking and not through online applications. What does it mean for anyone looking for a job in the U.S.? Well, you will have to network to find your next job opportunity!

Now, don't worry, in the U.S. networking is part of the game. Everybody plays it, and it is totally acceptable to connect with people and ask them to schedule a conversation with you. Networking does not have to be an uncomfortable process, so don't be intimidated. It is like any other skill—the more you do it, the better you will be at it, and the more you prepare, the easier it will become.

Networking is about connecting with people, and like everything else, it helps to be sincere. See it as a puzzle. You define a main goal or job you would like to reach, then start contacting people in those areas. This person will refer you to another one, and so on, until eventually you are in front of a person who has the right opportunity for you.

The end goal of networking is to meet with interesting people and secure what we call “**Informational Interview.**” An informational interview is a brief meeting (20 to 30 minutes) between a person who wants to learn about a career and a person working in that area. The purpose is not to get a job but to learn about the role, the industry, or the company of the person you're meeting.

## **Here are some of the best ways to network for an informational interview:**

- LinkedIn: LinkedIn is the most effective and efficient tool to identify the right people to contact for an informational interview. You can see who is active in your field, who has the job you are looking for, and who the hiring manager is.



- Networking events: They are great to meet people as participants expect to network. Ideally the best strategy is to attend one related to a topic focused on your career interest or personal interests so you will have a common topic for discussion.
- Panel discussions and other industry events: Panel discussions or other professional events are another great way to meet the right people. Not only can you target the industry, but you often have the list of the people presenting or attending and can prepare yourself to talk to them.
- Professional organizations: They are a great resource as well, as their mission is to build a network of people in the same field. It's a good idea to look at the member list in advance and to research the local leaders in the industry.
- Alumni networks: Alumni are always happy to help people from their school, so do not hesitate to check your local alumni list. You have something in common which is already half of the job done!
- Personal network: Don't underestimate the power of a personal network. It is always important that everyone around you knows that you are looking for an opportunity and **exactly what you are looking for**. You never know who they might know...

**The objectives of informational interviews can be to:**

- Learn about the required skills or experience to succeed in a specific position or a company.
- Learn about the local industry, and the networking opportunities for professionals in the field.
- Discover a field you never knew about or a hidden job market.
- Identify the culture and the potential fit within a company.
- Brush up on interviewing skills and questions.

- Learn how you can be an asset for a specific company or which problem you can solve for them.
- Increase your visibility, introduce yourself, potentially learn about internal opportunities.

**To be an effective networker, you should prepare the following:**

- **Your brand:** Understand why you are unique, know your skills and how you can solve problems for companies.
- **Your elevator pitch:** Have a three-sentence elevator pitch that describes your professional profile and what you are looking for. (See later chapter on this topic.)
- **Your target list:** Have a list of companies, industries, and titles you are looking for.
- **Your network:** Think about who in your network can help you connect with your targets.

**You can imagine three major phases in your job search journey:**

- Phase 1: Exploring opportunities: Learn about that industry, what it is about, the main actors. You can connect with any interesting profile at a company you targeted or an expert of the field.
- Phase 2: Clarification & Validation: You are looking to target people at your position level to learn more about the skills needed, the challenge, the culture, the interview process.
- Phase 3: Strategic prospecting: You are looking to connect with potential hiring managers to learn about open opportunities. You want to connect with people who are 1 or 2 levels higher than you.

**Steps for building a lasting job search network:**

- Do your research and prepare what you are looking for (*see above*).
- Send a request via email or LinkedIn.
- Follow up with a phone call if you don't receive a response.
- Schedule an informational interview.
- Send a follow up thank you note.

- Update the contact on your progress and stay in touch.

**Tips for organizing and tracking your networking meetings:**

It is good to set up a goal of talking to 25 decision makers. Then, create a spreadsheet to help keep track of your conversations:

Company	Contact	Title	Why it is interesting?
What do I want to learn?	Potential connection or referred by?	Contacted (when and via?)	Planned follow up

**Reach out and ask for an informational interview**

Remember that you are not asking for a job interview. You are reaching out to the person because you would like to have a conversation with them. When you send an email or LinkedIn request, be very specific and concise in your message:

- Appeal to their nature to help.
- Ask for something specific.
- Explain why you want to meet: make it clear you would like to learn more about their career history, perspective on the job or the industry.
- Personalize your request (why you chose them particularly) or who referred you.
- Do not make it sound like you are searching for a job.

**How to redact an email or a message for asking for an informational interview:**

1st paragraph: Mention how you got the person’s name and why you are reaching out.

2nd paragraph: Explain your background and what you are hoping to learn.

3rd paragraph: Ask for a convenient meeting time

The email/message needs to be short, precise and honest. This will ensure the best success! Also make sure to send a message to people who are active

or have a presence on social media. They are usually more receptive to this kind of offer.

*Example 1:*

“Hello...

I am reaching out because I was interested by your company and the type of position you are occupying, and I wanted to learn more about the reality of the job.

I will value your perspective on how to move forward... “

“I can only imagine how busy you are, so even 15 or 20 minutes for a cup of coffee or a virtual meeting would be greatly appreciated.”

*Example 2:*

“Dear Erin,

I am a college senior interested in working in Marketing. For the last year, I’ve been following your work for Bryan & Associates, and it’s really impressive to me. I particularly loved your recent campaign in the Atlantic – that multimedia component was totally unexpected and effective. If you ever have 20 minutes or so, I would love to learn more about how you started to work in this field and what skills you believe are most relevant for the profession.

Thank you much,  
Leila”

**Follow up!**

People are busy. It doesn’t mean they don’t want to help you, it just means it is a matter of TIMING, so don’t be discouraged if you don’t get an immediate answer. It is common in the U.S. to send two, even three follow-up emails.

**Now you have an informational interview. What questions do you want to ask?**

**If you are in Phase 1 or 2: Exploring opportunities and clarifying directions:**

- How did you get into this work?
- What do you like the most about it?
- What do you like least about it?
- Describe a typical day/week?
- How rapidly is the field growing?
- What types of skills are needed to succeed?
- Where else can I find people who do this kind of work?
- Do you have any suggestions of other people I could contact?
- May I say you referred me?

**If you are in Phase 3: Strategic Prospecting**

- What are the commonly used titles for this position?
- What degree is recommended for this job?
- What degree or certificate will employers look for?
- What are the important buzz words to include in a resume or cover letter for this position?
- Which skills are most important for success in this position?
- What are the most important interpersonal characteristics for success in this position?
- What are some related occupations?
- What is the typical salary range for this region?
- What are the opportunities for advancement? To what position?
- Do you have any additional words of advice?

Embrace the networking journey! This is the most valuable skill you will learn during your job search and something you should always keep doing - even once you are hired.

# HOW TO PITCH YOURSELF

Unlike in the French culture, self-promotion is expected and necessary in the U.S. when you're looking for a job or seeking to advance your career. Though it may feel uncomfortable at first, with a good formula and some practice, you can learn to deliver a thoughtful, natural, and effective personal "elevator pitch."

## What is an "elevator pitch"?

An elevator pitch is a 30-second presentation of yourself and your skills to a targeted audience (usually one person during a networking conversation) that answers the following questions:

- Who are you?
- What do you do? (Note: Even if you're not currently working, this is an opportunity to highlight your experience and skills.)
- What are you looking for? (Note: Adapt this to the person you're talking to.)

## When preparing your elevator pitch, keep in mind the following:

- **Keep it short!** Remember that in the professional context people have short attention spans and generally want to know what you can do for them, so get to the point in 30 seconds.
- **Keep your tone confident, without being arrogant.** You want to explain what you do and some of your accomplishments, without bragging or exaggerations.
- **Be general, instead of technical.** Unless you're in a very sector-specific context, try to use general industry terminology that anyone can understand.
- **Emphasize what makes you unique.** The person you're speaking with should clearly understand how you stand out. (For example, multi-cultural, multi-lingual with a unique perspective on XXX)
- **End with what you're looking for.** Make sure you end with a clear message about what opportunity you're looking for or information you're hoping to obtain.

## When delivering your pitch, keep in mind the following:

- **Speak naturally**

Try to maintain a conversational tone. If your preference is to memorize your written pitch, try to practice it until it feels natural to say it aloud.

- **Speak slowly**

Though you might be nervous and worried about forgetting an important detail, try to keep a slow, thoughtful pace. You don't want the person you're speaking with to miss anything. (Note: Limiting your written pitch to about 75 words is a good way to make sure you don't have to rush through it.)

- **Express confidence**

Try to be conscious of your body language. Even the best scripted pitch can lose its effectiveness if you don't appear confident. Keep your chest high, shoulders back, smile, and use a strong speaking voice. (Note: Try to imagine that you're the person listening to the pitch and that you're happy to help in any way possible.)

## Additional tips

### **Practice!**

After you've developed a pitch focused on your background and goals, practice and refine it. Reading your elevator pitch out loud can reveal any mistakes or opportunities to adjust the language. If possible, ask a friend to listen and give you feedback.

You could even rehearse your pitch in front of a mirror or do a simple video recording so you can see and hear how you present yourself.

### **Prepare a few versions of your pitch.**

Adapt to your audience: It's a good idea to have one general pitch that you can use at any moment, but you should also have a couple versions in your head so you can adapt to different situations (an interviewer, a former colleague, a new LinkedIn contact, etc...).

Adapt to the amount of time available to present yourself: In some cases, you might only have 15 seconds to present yourself and in others you might have as long as a minute or two.

Adapt to the industry: For example, if you are approaching a start-up company's booth at a career fair, you could include why you're especially excited about start-up businesses. The more personalized your ideas are, the more likely you are to get a positive result from the conversation. It shows your respect for the listener's time and your interest in his/her industry.

**Don't forget to add a written pitch to your online profiles.**

Including a written version of your elevator pitch in your online profiles allows you to "introduce" yourself to employers virtually and can help recruiters find you in a targeted search. It can also generate higher quality contacts from employers since you are proactively addressing what opportunities interest you and your unique skills.

**Keep it fresh!**

Spend some time thoughtfully structuring your personal elevator pitch and update it every year or so. Doing so will benefit you the rest of your life and can lead to better conversations and more meaningful long-term professional connections.

**Sources:**

Forbes.com

Indeed.com

LinkedIn.com Learning Blog



# PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

## In person:

- Make sure to verify the address and how long it will take you to get to the interview location
- Arrive early - minimum 15 minutes before- in case you have traffic issues

## On the phone:

- Verify call-in number early
- Be somewhere quiet so you won't have background noise

## Over video (Zoom, Microsoft Team, Blue Jeans etc...):

- Check and test your computer sound and video
- Have the computer elevated at your head level, check the lighting, don't be in a place that's too dark
- If your background doesn't look professional, change the background by going into the settings of the tool you will be using
- Login 5 minutes before the start time

## General tips

### Do your research:

- **About the company:** Check their website and social media pages. Also, check glassdoor.com where you will get information from people who have worked in the company, and also about salaries by position, feedback about interviews, etc...
- **About the role:** Make sure you carefully read the job description, try to find people on LinkedIn who have similar roles to see their background and key words they are using (might be different from where you are coming from).

- **About the interviewers:** Check the LinkedIn profile of your interviewers. That will help you understand their background, where they went to school, what languages they speak and even their interests. This is really good information to “connect” with the interviewers

**Attire:** Dress up! Appearance is important. You get one chance on your first impression.

Also: SMILE even if you just talking over the phone, we can hear you “smile”.

**Practice:** Interview with a family member or a friend, practice how you speak, answering questions you may get. Write down talking points if that helps and read out loud what you’ll say. Know what you wrote on your resume, and make sure you can give specifics about your experience. Provide data and results from your previous jobs.

**Most common interview questions:**

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why are thinking about leaving your current job?
- Why did you apply to this position?
- What interests you about this job?
- Can you describe your work style?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
- What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your salary requirements?
- Is there anything we didn’t cover that you want to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?

**Prepare questions you will ask in the end of the interview, for instance:**

- What are your priorities?
- What would you like to see the new hire do in his/her first 90 days?
- What is the culture of the company? Department?
- What does it take to be successful in this role in your opinion?

**Send a thank you note** after the interview. Reiterate your interest in the role and what you can contribute to the company.

# KEY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE U.S. IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

The United States is a country that offers countless professional opportunities provided you know how to seize them. To do so, it is important to better understand the local culture and adjust your approach accordingly. If you are among those who believe French and American business cultures are very similar because both are Western countries, you will be quickly surprised.

To help you prepare for your professional journey in the U.S. before you leave France, here are a few important cultural differences to keep in mind:

## **Diplomas:**

The concept of Grandes Ecoles is not known or understood by American recruiters, thus unfortunately a degree from Polytechnique or HEC will not make your job search any easier. The most recognized and acknowledged degrees in the U.S. are master's degree (5 to 6 years of studies), MBA (business), JD (law) and Ph.D. There is no equivalent to the HDR (Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches) in the U.S. While HDR is the highest academic degree one can obtain in France, in the U.S., Ph.D. remains the highest degree.

## **Communication:**

- Don't be worried about your accent when speaking English. Americans are fairly used to different regional and international accents in the workplace. (In fact, the French accent is usually considered quite "charming"!)
- In the professional context, Americans are direct and pragmatic communicators. Don't expect them to understand le "second degré" or irony. Speak clearly as they will take you at your word, and don't count too much on nonverbal communication: What is not said is not heard.

**Time management and meetings:**

- Punctuality is praised and practiced. Meetings have a firm start and end time, and there's an expectation that everyone is respectful of the schedule.
- Out of consideration for everyone's time, the meeting organizer will set a clear agenda and make sure all participants follow it.

**Working with Americans:**

You are expected to be both a team player and to perform well individually by contributing ideas and actions. Your manager might not have technical skills in your industry but has proven being a skilled manager. His or her job is to create and manage the best team possible to meet the organization's objectives.

**Additional references:****For a scientific analysis:**

Baudry, Pascal (2000). French and Americans. The Other Shore.

**For a better understanding of the American culture:**

Althen, Gary & Bennett, Janet (2003). American Ways.

**To know how Americans see the French:**

Platt, Polly (2005). French or Foe?

**For fun:**

Stanger, Ted (2004). Sacrés Américains! Nous, les Yankees, on est comme ça!

# THANK YOU TO OUR U.S. JOB SEARCH GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS!

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**About the FACC-Chicago Professional Mentoring Program:**

The French American Chamber of Commerce of Chicago's Professional Mentoring Program helps candidates articulate and implement a job search strategy when they have recently relocated to the U.S. or after a pause in their career. A network of volunteer mentors connected with the FACC offers support and guidance to candidates as they think through their career advancement and identify professional opportunities.

[Learn more here](#), or contact [Andrea Jett](#), FACC-Chicago Executive Director.

**Find out more about the FACC of Chicago:**

Website: [www.facc-chicago.com](http://www.facc-chicago.com)

Social Media:

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)

## **Annex 1**

### **Jane Doe**

1000 N Michigan Avenue, Unit 000 – Chicago IL 60600 – 312 312 312

Linkedin profile link – jane.doe@gmail.com

### **Profile**

Strategic, mission-driven trilingual (English-French-Spanish) business development leader with a track record of visionary and tactical successes, resulting in a wide variety of accomplishments in chemical and medical device manufacturing companies. Engaging, results-oriented, decisive leader, with proven success in concept-to-execution and turnaround. Expertise in managing organizational change across the value chain to achieve maximum results. Inclusive leader that operates with a sense of urgency and thrives in dynamically challenging environments requiring strong leadership, team building, lean practices and focused decision making.

### **Core competencies**

- Project Management
- Identification & Integration of Mergers & Acquisitions
- Six Sigma / Lean Manufacturing / 5 S
- Driving Clients Partnerships
- Business Development and Voice of Customer
- Negotiating Skills

### **Professional Experience**

***Company A , location***

***2015 – present***

A leader in.... with headquarters in New York and offices in 50 countries.

Company A serves a variety of clients in the areas of .....



## Director of Business Development

Led the .... Grew .... Managed .....

- Led the acquisition of ... including due diligence, financial analysis .....that resulted in a new product line generating XX in new revenue
- Spearheaded .... Research and development that cumulated in the creation of 10 new formulas and the launch of one new product line
- Led corporate cross functional teams for strategic planning, budgeting, marketing...

### **Company B, Location**

**2008-2014**

A niche player in the ..... industry with headquarters in Chicago and a network of distributors across the US. Company B created the first .... and was awarded .... In 2010

## Global Business Development Manager

Reported directly to the CEO and created ..... Activities included market research, identification of new markets, supply chain activities with vendors, trade shows and conferences.

- Identified business opportunities for .... And developed.... Resulting in X in revenues
- Developed strategic business plans for several product lines
- Participated in a global initiative to identify synergist opportunities in various markets

## Education

Master of Business Administration (MBA)	2000
University of Chicago, .....	
Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering	1995
University of Urbana Champaign, ....	

## **Professional Development**

Certificate: Six Sigma Black Belt

Certificate American Institute of Chemical Engineers Six Sigma

## **Community Involvement**

Volunteer – Make a Wish Foundation

2005-Present

## Annex 2

### Jane Doe

1000 N Michigan Avenue, Unit 10000, Chicago IL 60600

jane.doe@gmail.com

Linkedin Profile link

Mechanical Engineer with 5 years of experience in manufacturing operations in machinery industry looking for a project management position in a continuous improvement setting

### Summary of Skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Six Sigma – Green belt</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3D CAD and AutoCAD</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Product validation experience</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bilingual English/French</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Project manufacturing</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Equipment &amp; System calculation</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost estimates for materials and labor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Troubleshoot equipment</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Team management</b></li></ul>

### Experience

#### COMPANY A – location

**April 2017 – present**

Company description....Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. ... Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry.

## **Production Supervisor**

Manages a team of ..... . Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book.

- Improved team efficiency...
- List a few achievements

## **COMPANY B – location**

**January 2014 – March 2017**

Company description - Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book.

## **Mechanical Engineer**

Summary of role Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book.

- List a couple of achievements/results

## **Education**

Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering  
2014

University of ....

## **Sports**

- Played Soccer in ... league
- Coached ....