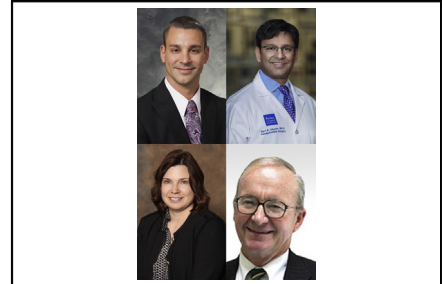


So, you are looking for a job: Pearls for a successful first cardiothoracic job search

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ABSTRACT

The final year of cardiothoracic surgery residency is an exciting time for most trainees because it marks the culmination of many years of hard work and dedication. However, it is not uncommon for trainees to also experience some degree of anxiety or uncertainty, particularly when it comes to understanding the necessary steps and finer details involved in seeking out and securing that much anticipated and well-deserved first job. This article explores the philosophy, strategy, and etiquette essential to navigating the various stages of one's initial job search, providing valuable information and perspective to those hoping to find a position that is best suited to one's skill set, needs, and long-term career goals. (*J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg* 2018; ■:1-10)



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Central Message

This article explores the philosophy, strategy, and etiquette essential to navigating the various stages of the job search and securing that long-awaited first job as a cardiothoracic surgeon.

Perspective

The first few years in practice are pivotal to your long-term success as a cardiothoracic surgeon. Preparation is key to a successful job search. Seek out jobs that will allow you to continue to grow and thrive, ultimately setting you up for a long, rewarding, and productive career. Although important, your entry-level salary is not as critical as your comfort and happiness in your new job.

See Editorial Commentary page XXX.

The final year of residency tends to be an exciting time for trainees because it marks the culmination of many years of hard work and dedication. The ultimate goal of landing your first job as a practicing cardiothoracic surgeon is no longer just a dream, but a reality that is just around the corner.

However, many trainees also experience considerable anxiety and uncertainty during this time, particularly when it comes to understanding the necessary steps and finer details of the actual job search. The purpose of this article is to explore the philosophy, strategy, and etiquette essential to navigating the various stages of the job search process to secure that long-awaited and well-deserved first job.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAMC	= Association of American Medical Colleges
CV	= curriculum vitae
MGMA	= Medical Group Management Association
RVU	= relative value unit

PREPARATION DURING RESIDENCY

The job search may seem a long way off to most residents in training. Although the tasks of searching, applying, interviewing, negotiating, and ultimately accepting a position are typically undertaken during the final year of training (Table 1), a successful job search will be greatly facilitated with the right preparation and planning well before you begin exploring the job market.

Building Your Professional Reputation

Recruiting and hiring a new surgeon require a substantial commitment of time and resources by a practice. Employers go to great lengths to make sure they make an offer to the right candidate. They will not only contact your references, they will also seek out their own trusted contacts (anesthesiologists, perfusionists) who have interacted with you to get additional perspective on the type of partner you will be. The field of medicine is a smaller world than you may realize; the cardiothoracic surgery community is even smaller. It is critical that you conduct yourself with the utmost professionalism each and every day. Having the reputation as a rude or difficult surgeon will have significant negative repercussions during the job search.

Mentorship and Networking

The importance of securing mentorship during training cannot be emphasized enough. You likely have encountered a number of mentors during medical school, general surgery residency, and outside the field of medicine. Do your best to preserve these relationships, in addition to cultivating new ones. Your program director is likely to be the most willing and accessible mentor during your cardiothoracic training. Meet with them early and often. Seek out other faculty who are also willing to take on this roll. Do not limit yourself by relying on just one mentor or faculty from a single institution. Keep in mind that although these mentors typically enjoy this role and will take great pride in your success, you must also play your part by being a good mentee.¹ Be proactive by scheduling regular meetings, keeping them informed of your career aspirations and goals, following through on opportunities they provide, and taking advantage of any chances to collaborate. A solid group of diverse and reliable mentors, each with their own unique strengths and perspectives, should provide you with

TABLE 1. Recommended timeline of job search events during final year of training

Last year of training*	Job search targets
July to September	Solidify priorities, goals, and characteristics of ideal job Begin exploring through various avenues Start applying
October to December	Phone interviews First visits/interviews
January to March	Second interview Consider offers
March to May	Negotiate contract details Begin state licensing process for accepted or high potential positions
May to July	Begin credentialing Relocate
July to September	Consider taking time between training/first job (typically 1 mo or less) Start your well-deserved first job as a cardiothoracic surgeon

*It is highly recommended that one establishes a reputation for being professional, industrious, courteous, and caring throughout training (and beyond).

invaluable guidance, support, and opportunities that will benefit you during your training, the job search, and throughout your career.

Do not underestimate the value of reaching out to others beyond your core group of mentors. Putting in the time to create a robust network of contacts starting early in residency can open many doors later during the job search. Current and past clinical faculty, research faculty, and co-residents, as well as colleagues and faculty you met on the interview trail, sales representatives, and even people outside of the field of medicine, can all be potentially helpful contacts. During residency, you will probably want to focus most of your networking efforts on meeting colleagues within our field and your specific areas of interest. National meetings are perhaps the easiest way to accomplish this goal. Although your mentors and other faculty are typically willing to make introductions at these meetings, do not rely solely on them. Be proactive and introduce yourself whenever possible. A number of surgical societies (eg, Society of Thoracic Surgeons, American Association for Thoracic Surgery, American College of Surgeons, Thoracic Surgery Directors Association) have functions at national meetings that are geared toward residents, some with the specific goal of putting trainees in contact with practicing surgeons and potential employers from across the country. Take advantage of these opportunities if you are fortunate enough to attend these meetings. Also, consider asking your mentors about opportunities to be involved in national/society committees, which frequently have resident members working alongside prominent practicing surgeons. Visiting professors are another great

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