The first piece of advice is to appoint yourself CEO of your job search. I can think of no single piece of job-hunting advice more valuable or more important to follow. The rationale behind envisioning yourself as the Chief Executive Officer of your job search is twofold.

In the first place, there are genuine parallels between the types of decisions you need to make as the CEO of a company and decisions that you need to make as the CEO of your job search. In both instances, you are obligated to create and execute a plan, to marshal resources, to understand and adjust to changing market conditions. You also need to make tough decisions on the basis of inconclusive and sometimes conflicting data.

Equally important, though, is the fact that by envisioning yourself as the CEO of your job search, you establish the kind of mind-set a job search needs: proactive and self-directed.

There is no way I can overemphasize how much impact a “being in control” mind-set can have on every aspect of your search. You can’t control everything that has a bearing on your job search, of course – least of all, factors like [the economy], and hiring policies of the organizations you approach. What you can control, though, are the decisions you make in response to these factors, the job targets you set, the strategies you adopt, the daily routine you follow, and the skills you develop to make you a stronger candidate.

A job search, even under the best of circumstances, is an emotional roller-coaster ride. The ride is a lot smoother when you are at the controls.
CAREER MANAGEMENT & JOB SEARCH STRATEGY

Before beginning your job search, it is important to consider the steps involved in the career planning process. Even if you are confident about your career goals, we encourage you to seriously consider the questions involved in self-assessment. If you can’t articulate your strengths, personal traits, skills, interests, work values and accomplishments, it will be difficult to effectively market yourself to an employer during an interview.

**Step 1: Expand Your Information Base & Generate Ideas**

**Self-Assessment**
Identify your goals, values, interests, skills and strengths. They are the foundation of your career choice and will help you develop a complete picture of what you have to offer employers.

To assess your goals and values, ask yourself questions such as:
- What do I want to accomplish in life?
- Where do I want to be in one year, five years, and twenty years?
- What is more important to me, money or job satisfaction?
- How will I balance family and career?

When identifying your interests, consider the question “What am I looking for in a job?” in relation to the following:
- Area of specialization
- Geographic location
- Job attributes
  - Culture
  - Work environment
  - Level of responsibility
  - Salary and benefits
  - Type of co-workers
  - Mentoring and training
- Specific organizations

Determine in advance where you are willing to compromise.

When assessing your skills and strengths, consider:
- Experience
- Skills
- Personality and temperament
- Financial resources

Career Assessment
Learn as much as you can about what job functions, industry segments, and work environments in which you fit best. Conduct research on public, private and non-profit sectors, your desired area of specialization, potential employers and possibly the biographies of key decision-makers. Consider:

- Job types and responsibilities
- Career paths
- Industry trends
- The organization’s needs, problems and challenges
- Specific organizations
  - Types of clients
  - Alumni/decision makers
- Areas of interest:
  - Economic and Financial Policy
  - Environmental Policy
  - Government, Politics, and Policy Studies
  - Human Rights and Social Justice
  - International Development Studies
  - Public and Nonprofit Management
  - Science and Technology Policy
  - Social Policy

Consult:

- Office of Career Management (OCM)
- Career Field Guides- http://www.cipa.cornell.edu/career/development/fieldguides.cfm
- Professors
- Fellow students
- Alumni (CIPA, Cornell & your undergraduate university)
- LinkedIn
- People within the public, private & non-profit sectors
- Friends and relatives

**Step 2: Focus and Decide**

Once you have gathered information and identified your options, you will need to narrow your focus to the options that seem best suited for you. One of the best ways to do this is by conducting informational interviews.

**Informational Interviews**

Though they are often overlooked by many job seekers, informational interviews are a great way to obtain first-hand information about the careers that you are considering. They provide a non-threatening, undemanding way to gain access to the highest levels of management within an organization.
Most people, especially Cornell graduates, will be happy to spend a few minutes with you. The key is to make sure they understand that you are not asking for a job, but only want to gain a better understanding of their position and the organization. Informational interviews can help you accomplish the following:

- Learn about job responsibilities
- Test your assumptions
- Ask for opinions
- Identify contacts
- Make an impression for the future

Informational interviewing and your experiences during your summer (fall or spring) internship should help you to further narrow your career options. Each of the experiences will provide information which will help you make informed decisions about the career that will be best for you.

**Step 3: Implement**

**Marketing Yourself**
When you have developed your career goals, you need to develop a marketing plan. How exactly will you present yourself to prospective employers and how will you market yourself? Consider the image you portray and how you wish to position yourself. Then develop the paper tools that demonstrate your strengths; a well written résumé, or CV and cover letter.

**Networking**
Networking involves building professional relationships among your personal contacts. Many students obtain their jobs through networking. The more people who know about you and your qualifications, the better the chance that you will get the job you want. Remember to include your classmates in this process and share information.

**Interview Training**
The job interview is one of the most important parts of your job search campaign. Develop the skills you will need to allow yourself to make an effective presentation in an interview, using the following resources:

- Interviewing workshops, mock interviews, individual career advising

**Job Search Strategy**
Send cover letters and résumés to prospective employers, asking for an interview. In your cover letter, mention any contact or connection, or ask one of your contacts to make an introduction and then call the person directly. Follow-up on requests quickly. Be diplomatically assertive.
Target your job search by concentrating your efforts on 10-15 organizations that match your desired profile, or by focusing on a particular geographic area. Get to know as much about each organization and as many people at each organization, as possible. At the same time, however, keep your eyes open for unexpected opportunities in other areas.

Your strategy and commitment level will determine the type of job you are offered after graduation. Here are some tips that may help you during your job search:

- **Take control and manage your job search process.** You must develop a plan for obtaining the position you want, including a timeline for each step of the process. Start early and stay on track!

- **Find the hiring authority at the organization you are interested in.** This may not be the human resources director. Human resources people are often responsible only for screening applicants to find one that fits the specific criteria for an open position. Remember that recruiters are merely one available resource.

- **NETWORK!** Take advantage of the opportunities at Cornell to meet leaders in the industry. Attend colloquium, guest lectures across campus and Q & A sessions. Seek out opportunities to meet people in your field of interest.

- **Your job search is a partnership among you, CIPA, and the Office of Career Management.** The Office of Career Management (OCM) is here to guide you through the job search process. OCM is a resource for information, career advising, résumé and cover letter editing, and mock interviews. Take an active role and you will obtain the job you are seeking!

- **Go for the job you want.** There are numerous examples of people who “beat the odds” and obtained jobs through creativity and sheer determination. If you have a Cornell MPA degree and a reasonable amount of work experience combined with your academic coursework you are in a strong position to convince an employer to hire you for the job of your choice.

- **Be honest with yourself and your potential employers.** Don’t merely tell them what they want to hear. Your goal is not to get any job, but to get the job that’s right for you. Be candid, but be realistic based upon your work experience.

- **Remember the critical job search skills.** Preparation, networking, utilizing opportunities, follow-up, persistence, self-motivation, and a balance of ambition and realism are critical to the success of your job search.
• **Position yourself.** Help employers to understand, as a CIPA MPA graduate student you received intensive training in the areas of administration, economics and quantitative analysis. The classroom experience was enhanced by practical, real-world work experience. The flexibility of the curriculum allowed you to specialize by focusing on one of the eight areas of concentration.

**The Offer**
If the job hasn’t been offered to you and you want the position, ask for the position. Also ask about your chances relative to other candidates and what you can do to help the employer make a decision. Weigh your options and diplomatically negotiate your offer, as appropriate. Be prepared to demonstrate to the employer what you can contribute to the organization.