



The Plan: Getting a “Good” Job

*Advice from Andrew Cunningham,
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Your Mission and Your Strategy

If your experience is like mine, your careers department defines a “good” company as one that is good at greenwashing. Here, we can call a for-profit a for-profit. Some are worse than others but all are bound to profit as their mission. Some of them make a positive difference along the way, but they are not aligned with *your* mission. I say all of this not to just wave my hands and say “No ethical consumption under capitalism who cares” but more to say “It’s complicated and it is okay to work at places that you are not excited about or even places that you dislike in order to position yourself better to make your real impact.”

I spent far too much time in my college days digging up the dirt on individual for-profits and why I would *never* sink to working for those places. What I realized though is that’s an exhausting waste of my time. Companies act how companies act and the people at the top are never going to be morally impressive. You can determine your own moral thresholds for companies that you would and wouldn’t work for, but people have different situations and the system will continue to operate with or without its individual cogs. All I can say here is do your best.

I also spent far too much time looking for the scarce organizations that I did feel aligned with. Few places are able to sustain themselves under capitalism if they are *truly* aligned and even fewer have open roles. Most are tight-knit co-ops of 5-10 employees. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the revolution will be posted on a job board.

Align with yourself and figure out what you want out of your job first and foremost, before you even enter the job search if you can. It’s helpful to have a mental rubric. You may find a job at a mission-aligned organization that has below-average benefits and it is acceptable to view that as an equal-impact opportunity to a run-of-the-mill for-profit that has a 4-day workweek, good time-off, and a high salary. Money and time are sources of power. When we have power we can share it and play a different game than those at the top.

Do not feel locked into the notion that what you get paid to do is your impact. There are far fewer opportunities to get paid to do good than there are people who want to do good. If you become a strong organizer, perhaps you can be part of the force that turns that tide. As it stands though, we are working with some pretty hellish economic conditions under a government that is actively hostile towards labor. As we enter the job hunt, we can have grace for this truth and allow ourselves to take on the disguise of a cog.

I offer all of this not as an absolute truth of things, but as a recounting of my own experiences and some traps I have felt held back by.

The Job Search

I swear by keeping yourself organized with a job-hunting spreadsheet. I treat my spreadsheet as a personal dashboard that gives me easy access to useful information so that I can easily apply in big batches while keeping track of my job-hunting progress. My spreadsheet looked like this:

Organization	LinkedIn Page	Application Status	Notes	Existing Connections	Open Role	Connection Outreach	App Submitted
[name of org]	[link to linkedin page]	[submitted, not submitted, etc]	[any notes to self]	[1st/2nd linkedin connections]	[link to open role]	[date]	[date]

I want to emphasize that a referral genuinely does go a long way. If you have a first connection somewhere, reach out. If you have a second connection somewhere, ask to be put in touch and they'll probably say yes. This is a game of numbers and odds.

You might be sending a lot of applications, possibly over a hundred. Your goal is to make this as painless a process as possible for yourself. Make a broadly appealing cover letter where you can just change a couple sentences in the intro. Keep yourself organized and focused. If you find yourself running out of places to apply, you may need to lower your expectations, deep dive some job boards, and find some obscure, uninteresting companies to apply for. There's no shortage of "B2B SaaS startup revolutionizing [x] using [y]," or whatever your industry equivalent is, that will pay you a good wage and ultimately have little-to-no impact on the world as a whole. Just plug your nose and chug along.

If you can find a profitable worker-owned place that will pay you enough to be comfortable or you feel confident in starting one, by all means do so. If not, there are a lot of resources that industry has, which we can take for ourselves to help us to succeed, especially as we're getting established in our careers and our skills. We're playing the long-game- not "incremental change" long, but "hit the ground running when we're ready" long.

Some Parting Advice

When it comes time to organize, connect with experienced organizers- my favorite networks have been an OPEIU local that my organizing effort was working with, The Tech Workers Coalition, and (of course) Science for the People. Learn up on whole-worker organizing and familiarize yourself with Jane McAlevey. Really take it to heart. Find ways to blow off steam: I used to write a lot of unsent letters to management and I maintained a "corporate gaslighting" note where I wrote down terms and phrases management commonly used to cover up blatantly profit-driven decisions. The phrase "I've got your back" can go a long way. Mean it. Whether we win or lose, our best path forward is solidarity.

Below is QR code that will take you to a collection of documents by Science for the People. "One Foot In, One Foot Out" by Richard Levins is particularly relevant to this theme (Document 1.4).

