

**Q&A Column**  
**Author: Mark Swartz**

**Email Subject Line: Creating A “Hot List” of Potential Employers**

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**Headline: Finding Employers That Match Your Work Preferences**

**Summary:**

I have started looking for a new job but already I'm feeling stuck. I'd like to hook up with a reputable firm that is within a reasonable commuting distance. Any advice on how I could go about finding potential employers that match this description?

Lyle T., Vancouver, British Columbia

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**Headline: Finding Employers That Match Your Work Preferences**

**Dear Mark,**

I have started looking for a new job but already I'm feeling stuck. The positions I'm seeing advertised are with employers that are either too far away from where I live, or else the employer isn't very well known. I'd like to hook up with a reputable firm that is within a reasonable commuting distance. Also I like working for bigger companies because I believe they give me a better chance of advancement over time. Any advice on how I could go about finding potential employers that match this description?

Lyle T., Vancouver, British Columbia

**Dear Lyle,**

“Start broad, then narrow down” is the axiom I generally use for people who are commencing a work search. In other words, create as large a list of possible employers as you can, to give yourself plenty of targets. Then narrow down to the types of employers you'd prefer to work for and go from there.

How do you do this? By first identifying some of your basic preferences in terms of work environments, much as you have done above regarding commuting distance and the employer being well-known. Other common criteria are size of the company or organization (large, medium or small), industry type, established or just starting up, ranking in terms of sales, etc.

Once you've decided which factors are most important to you, the process accelerates. Stage one is simply to write down all the employers you already know of that might hire people in your field. Those that come closest to meeting most of the criteria you've expressed get added to your “Hot List.” Others that seem like reasonable prospects but only match a few of your criteria go on your “Warm” list. The rest you can put on your “Others” page.

Next is using Trade Directories to broaden your initial list. Head over to Company Directories from Industry Canada ([www.strategis.gc.ca](http://www.strategis.gc.ca), then “Company Directories”).

You can do an advanced search on the Canadian Company Capabilities database using variables such as city or postal code, industry (based on the North American Industry Classification System -NAICS), product or service, number of employees, export sales, and more.

There is also a database of Federally Incorporated Companies, Volunteer and Business Associations, and Canadian Importers. If it's American employers you're looking for, visit Dun and Bradstreet's Hoovers database, [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com).

Other ways to fine-tune your list? If you want to know who all the potential employers are in your town or city, click onto [www.yellowpages.ca](http://www.yellowpages.ca). Under the header "What are you looking for?" choose "Business Name" and, in the search bar, type in the name of a firm or organization you already know of in the field and location you're targeting. When the information listing for this employer appears, click on "Category" and a list of competitors – and possible employers – shows up! You can also consult your local chamber of commerce for a directory of member businesses and organizations nearby. And it doesn't hurt to drive around and record names of firms you see that appeal to you. Later you can look them up in a Trade Directory to learn about their specifics.

After you have your list developed and sorted, you can focus your marketing efforts properly. Those on the Hot List get the most personalized attention (use your networking to get referred in, if possible). The Warm List firms you can try to reach by targeted mailings or phone calls. And the Others can be mass mailed. This way you allot your time in a way that maximizes your reach and gives you the best chance of having your work preferences met.