

It's Job Hunting, Not Job Wishing

It is a new year and your resolution is a whopper: you want a new job. Great, but prepare to work your tail off. Not only are jobs a wee bit scarce at the moment, but most people do not understand the amount of effort required, nor the tactics required to successfully land that dream job. The good news is that with the right effort and know-how, you could soon be upgrading your cubicle.

Let's start with the issue of time. You need to be dedicated. This means the task of job hunting becomes a regular daily task. If you are currently unemployed, this begins first thing in the morning. If you are currently employed, commit to using your nights at home and your lunch hour at work (or other great moments of escape). That is the easy part.

Here is the killer. How much time should you spend on the job search? That depends on how quickly you wish to find a new job. Stated more motivationally: how quickly do you wish to leave your current job? If the goal is six weeks or less, you should be spending 15 hours per week, minimum. If the goal is closer to six months, you should be spending at least 10 hours per week. Any less than 10 hours per week and you are not serious about finding a new job.

On to successful job hunting tactics. Begin by using a spreadsheet to track every single job search-related task. What is the task, when is it due, etc. If you map out the specific sequence of tasks before you, your odds of success increase dramatically. Use the spreadsheet to organize the following must-do job hunting best practices:

- Polish your resume. If you have been with the same organization for a long time, your resume will be out of date. Do not focus on specific tasks as much as specific skills you have honed and can leverage in other jobs with other organizations. Avoid organizational specific jargon. Try to quantify your accomplishments in terms of time saved, costs saved, clients gained, revenues generated, etc.
- Let someone else polish your resume. After you have knocked off the dust, send it to at least three trusted professional friends. Tell them to play the role of a hiring manager. Ask them what your resume "says" to them. Ask them what signals it sends.
- Master your "elevator speech." The elevator speech is your highly concise and compelling explanation of what you are looking for and why you are awesome (approximately 15-20 seconds). Don't be shy. You use it when speaking to nearly anyone who you involve in your job search – not simply contacts at companies where you apply or interview.
- Post online. Depending on the nature of the job you are seeking, the popular online job sites might be worth your time. Some question how useful they can be for a variety of reasons. Who cares. They are free and when you are hunting for a job you cover all of your bases.

- Make relationships with recruiters. They are in the hunt to – thus the term ‘headhunters.’ If you do not know any, call your most successful friends in business, they will know a few. Headhunters vary in quality like any other professional, so a solid referral is best. There is no downside with headhunters, they are professionals with your best interests in mind – besides, you do not pay them, employers do.
- Map out your network. Your network is much larger than you think. Current friends, friends you have lost touch with, old colleagues, college acquaintances, your dentist, the lady who sold you your first car, your uncle you have not seen in six years, etc. Think hard and start contacting them. The research is clear: *it is who you know*.
- Contact high potentials. These are people who are not in your network, but you know about them and feel they can help you. You want the opportunity to work for their organization or you merely want their advice, and maybe access to their network. Approach in person or via phone if possible. You never ask for a job or access to their network. You ask for professional advice and a fresh pair of eyes to look at your resume. Offer to buy them a cup of coffee. If you connect with them, it could lead to a great new contact or even a job.
- Follow up. Work the spreadsheet and make sure you that you follow up with all of the people on your list. There are two types of follow up. The first is you trying at least three times to contact someone on your list. The second is you getting back to them twice after the initial contact. The first time is immediately after speaking with them to say thank you. The second is a few weeks later (email will suffice) to say hello and update them on your progress.
- When rejected, find out why. It is difficult for some people to be honest, but you still need to try. When you are rebuffed by an organization, get on the phone and ask why. Was it a particular aspect of your personality? What? Self awareness is step one to changing your job hunting and interviewing skills.
- Celebrate rejections! Realize that every single rejection puts you one step closer to your next amazing career stop!

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