

The Keys to a Successful Job Search

Len Adams, CPC, President & Chief Executive Officer

Regardless of whether you are currently employed and seeking to change positions, or, are between positions due to lay off, corporate restructuring, etc., the principles behind a successful search strategy are the same. The only potential variable is the sense of urgency which one might feel.

Nevertheless, it is important to realize that when undertaking a job search program, one must believe that the search process itself is work. Therefore, if you are currently employed and seeking to make a change, the process must be approached as if you are taking on a part time job. Conversely, if you are seeking a new position because you are out of work, your full time job is now to seek work

Following are the basic steps:

1. Perform a Self Skills Inventory and Evaluate the Possibilities

Whatever your reason is for seeking a new position, it is an ideal time to evaluate what you want out of your next position that you do not currently have, or did not have in your last position.

Evaluate your current skills and abilities -

Are they in demand?

Do they need to be updated?

Are you an entrepreneurial type who has been stuck in a large corporation; or, have you been in a marketing role when you really should be in an administrative position?

Is the position you have been in one that is no longer in demand (e.g.; bank teller)?.

Are any of your skills transferable?

2. Expand Your Horizons

One of the most serious mistakes most job seekers make when undertaking a search is to seek positions only within the industry they were in. I have found it very useful to explore "allied industries." As an example, if one was employed as a banker, it may be useful to explore companies that develop and market any one of a variety of products and services to banks (i.e. computer software, hardware, forms, etc.). The knowledge that someone has from the "inside" is invaluable to those industries that market to the industry you have been in.

3. Temporary Work - A Permanent Necessity

Another mistake many jobseekers make is to discount the value of temporary or consulting work. It is a known fact that a large number of interim positions in today's market end up as full time opportunities. We in the industry refer to these "temporary" opportunities as "long term paid interviews." What better way to showcase your skills and abilities to a potential employer than to successfully complete a project for them? Do not look down on temporary work. It is no longer just for secretaries and administrative support as was the case years ago. Temporary positions exist in almost every

professional category available in today's marketplace . Remember- "Life is a temporary assignment"

4. **If You Can't Raise the Bridge - Lower the Water**

Flexibility is one the keys to a successful job search . It is imperative that one set realistic expectations regarding compensation, title, perks, benefits, etc. Consult industry salary surveys to determine your "market worth." If you are out of work, and are having difficulty identifying positions to match your last salary, evaluate whether your previous compensation plan was commensurate with the rest of the marketplace. If so, the marketplace will dictate a reasonable package.. While we do not advocate selling one self "short", if your skills did not match your compensation, put your ego aside and explore every reasonable opportunity. As important as money and perks are, do not let them, be the focal point of your search. I have always said that all things being equal, if the candidate is perfect for the position, and the position is perfect for the candidate, money is usually not an object of discussion.

5. **Develop A Plan and Commit To It**

The job search process is appropriately named --it is a process. The process involves the development of a comprehensive plan to determine what type of position you are looking for, where this position might exist (if it exists), and what steps are necessary to attain this position.

It is imperative to know where, how and when you are going to search. As in any of life's journeys, if you do not know what you are looking for, how will you know when you have found it?

6. **Get Organized**

One of the most important tips to remember as you begin your search is to GET ORGANIZED! In simple terms, this means you must keep detailed records and plans as to where you are going to send your resumes/marketing letters, set up specific follow up dates and stick to it!

Be prepared with an ample supply of letterhead, resumes, envelopes, and postage. Be sure to have access to an answering machine/pager /voice mail (or ideally, a live message center), computer (or secretarial assistance), Internet connections, industry research and periodicals, newspapers, etc.

7. **Do It Now!**

No one can do it for you. As one involved in an industry where the telephone is our livelihood, I can tell you that that telephone begins to weigh 1000 pounds after a while. It is very easy to develop "writers block" when it comes to sending out those cover letters; and, we can think of a 101 contests on which to use that postage! Unless you are in a field in which there exists a great demand for talent, no one is going to come looking for you. You must get your resume out, or, if you are employed, make yourself visible.

Now What?

You are ready to begin, now what? It is useful at this point to identify what some of the most common and useful job search tactics are (in no order of importance).

First - Network, Network, Network!

Work your rolodex. Any one who has been in business for any period of time has no doubt developed a priceless resource of contacts right in their own rolodex. DON'T BE SHY! The more people who know you are looking (unless you are currently employed and need to maintain strict confidentiality), the better off you are. We in the recruitment industry live by the philosophy that everyone knows ten people. If you get the word out to enough people, exponentially, your search will multiply itself. Continue to attend industry seminars, volunteer to speak, keep up with industry

colleagues.

Second - Surf the Web

The Internet is quickly becoming one of the most useful tools available in the job search process. It makes it possible to identify recruiters, corporations, job listings and a myriad of information. The downside is one can spend five years on the Internet, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, and probably not even scratch the surface of the amount of information available. It is a wonderful tool.. Use it as such. It is very easy however, to quickly become lost and possibly become the victim of "information overload."

Third - Monitor Help Wanted Advertisements

Religiously monitor the help wanted advertisements in business and professional publications, as well as The Wall Street Journal, New York Times and National Business Employment Weekly. By doing so, you will not only discover positions, you will also learn what areas of the job market are in demand, as well as what skills employers seeking.

Fourth - Seek Out Professional Recruiters

Utilize the services available through the professional recruitment industry. When utilized properly, a professional recruiting firm can be extremely useful in identifying and successfully attaining positions.