

The New Rules of Job Searching



If you're reading this, chances are that you're in the market for a new job, a new career, or just a new challenge. Whether it be by choice, or by chance, the reality is that finding a job is just that, a full-time job. One of the biggest mistakes that many job seekers make is that they do not set out with a strategy on exactly how they will find this new opportunity. Let's be honest, it's not easy. By developing a Job Search Strategy, you will position yourself for success in securing not only the job that you want, but the one that you deserve.

WHAT YOUR RESUME SAYS ABOUT YOU

Your resume is the first thing that potential employers will see. Do not overlook the opportunity that this gives you to outshine other candidates.

In any market, employers often have too many resumes for any one job posting. This means that they must wade through many pieces of paper or emails in order to narrow their choices for interview prospects. Unfortunately, this also may mean that your potential employer will read the first couple of lines and scan the rest in an effort to get as much information as quickly as possible.

Many employers do this because the majority of resumes which cross their desk are not impressive. Resumes often come poorly formatted, full of grammatical errors and resplendent with spelling errors.

While many people believe that a resume is a chronological listing of your employment history and your accomplishments, it is instead a sales brochure, and the product is you. Potential employers do the same thing. They have not met you yet and must rely on the documentation that you send in. So what does your resume say about you?

This is a question that you must ask yourself before hitting the send button on your email. Each individual job presents a unique opportunity to develop a resume that is best suited for the job to which you are applying. For instance, if you are applying for a position as an Executive Assistant then your prose and ability to pull together wording is most important, not to mention grammar and spelling. Your resume should be able to sell your potential employer on your ability. Every resume should help you to sound intelligent or qualified, and not end up confusing your reader. In other words, use

verbiage that is common to the field but will not require your reader to use a dictionary to interpret your meaning. Avoid buzzwords that are unnecessary or overused and abused.

Take a long look through objective eyes at the resume that you produce. Better yet, have a trusted friend who will be honest with you, evaluate your resume and give you their first impressions about the person behind the document. After all, that will be exactly what your potential employer will be doing. They will be making a judgment about the person behind the resume.



THE ELEVATOR SPEECH

An elevator speech is a quick 15 to 30 second statement that will serve as your introduction to others. An elevator speech is an important networking tool that you will use to market yourself, meet people or connect with opportunities. It can be a sound bite, almost like a personal movie trailer, or it can be a longer commercial about yourself. What is consistent is that it must be concise, clear, informative and engaging. The goal isn't to say as much as you can, but actually to start a conversation and generate interest in what you have to offer.

Another benefit to having a prepared elevator speech is that you will have an increased level of confidence to make the most of opportunities that arise before you. You never know who you will share an elevator with or bump into in your daily life. Everyone you meet is a potential contact who is either in a position of power themselves or knows someone who can connect you.

There are a few key factors that you must consider to successfully develop an elevator speech that will help you in your job search. First, your elevator speech must sound effortless, conversational and natural. This means that although you will be practicing it in front of the mirror and with your friends, you will not be memorizing it. You want to know the content backwards and forwards so that when you do say it, it doesn't sound like a canned memorized speech, but rather something that came naturally in conversation.

Make the speech memorable and sincere. This is a window to your personality that a future employer or networking

contact will be able to connect with. Write and rewrite the speech in order to sharpen the focus and eliminate awkward construction. Your elevator speech should leave your listener asking for more information.

Giving your elevator speech may make you nervous, but remember to take it slowly and don't rush. Pause between sentences and remember to breathe. While you're giving your speech, maintain eye contact with your listener and project your passion for what it is that you do. Don't hesitate to wrap it up earlier than planned if you see that the listener's eyes are glazing over or they aren't interested in what you have to say.

If you're cold calling a hiring manager and get the voicemail, try using your elevator speech as a message. Often times, voicemails are just as effective as an in person introduction. In this case, be sure to focus on how you can benefit this employer and help them solve their problems. The focus of your speech should be the employer and the benefits they will reap by hiring you as opposed to focusing on you.

End your speech with an action, such as asking for a business card or an appointment. This is probably where most people fall short. If your elevator speech leaves your listener asking for more information, make sure you give it to them in a timely fashion. Don't forget to update your speech as your situation changes or as the situation you find yourself in changes.

Using an elevator speech will only help to improve your chances for developing relationships and networking that can lead to a successful job.



ORGANIZE YOUR WAY TO A BETTER JOB

Managing a job search is like managing any other large project. First, you must create a strategy. Then, you have to create a structure that will force you to operate efficiently and productively. When you put together a system to manage the flow of contacts, resumes, follow-ups and interviews you'll find that your job search goes much more smoothly and you're less apt to overlook an important step in your communication.

The first step in a job search is to focus a game plan for different types of job opportunities. One way of achieving this is to categorize the types of jobs you want into three different arenas. The first category would be jobs you think are probably outside of your specific skill set. In other words you think you may not be quite qualified for them but you'd love to work for that company or in that position-your dream job. The second category are jobs you think you can probably get because you are the most likely candidate. They may not be as glamorous, however, they are respectable and you believe you can qualify for them easily. The third category are jobs you choose randomly that you may not be qualified for, but they just might be fun.

By splitting the types of jobs you wish to interview for into three different categories you open up the field for potential employment and allow your mind to explore different possibilities. While jobs in category number one may be dream jobs, the employer may have training available to bring you up to speed. Therefore, it's important to keep everything organized and not confuse categories 1, 2 or 3.

Your next step is to define file folders with specific headings to organize your search. Here are a couple of ideas:

1. *"A" prospects are the most interesting and hot employment prospects that you do not want to lose track of. These are jobs that you will watch daily.*
2. *An ideas folder will hold all your brainstorming ideas that can help you later. For example, if you receive a letter with the business reply card in it and would like to have something similar printed it would go into your "idea" file.*
3. *A cover letters folder will hold examples of cover letters that you have either written yourself, friends have given you or those you have found for which you believe will help you to write a better letter yourself.*
4. *A resume folder will hold all copies of your current resume and any changes you make. If you produce three different resumes for different types of jobs, this is the folder where they will be stored.*

5. *Telephone scripts is a folder that holds notes for planned future telephone conversations or a quick one minutes "elevator" speech where you can present yourself, your strengths and reasons why companies would want to hire you within a matter of 60 seconds.*
6. *Your correspondence folder will hold all correspondence you received and copies of those letters you send to all companies with whom you have been making application for employment. You can separate these companies using paperclips to keep them together.*
7. *A diary folder should hold a daily journal of all telephone calls that you have made or correspondence that you have e-mailed so you can remember what was called and what was sent.*

Now create a workspace for yourself where only you are allowed. This means your spouse, your children and your guests must stay away from your paperwork, your diaries and your folders. This is the place in the house where you will work to find employment and your dream job.

Remember that for the most part, perception is reality. Therefore it's in your best interest to have a professional sounding e-mail account from which to send communication to prospective employers. Gmail works really well for that. But it's also important to choose a name that isn't cutesy or fun. A very professional sounding e-mail account can be first name.last name@gmail.com.

Establish a schedule for yourself so that you know what is expected every morning and afternoon. In other words, in the morning you may choose to handle priority projects, writing thank you notes or sending resumes while the afternoons will be spent making phone calls or networking. The schedule you choose should not depend upon what you prefer but rather the availability of people in your industry.

It's important to develop job search management strategies that work best for you. Integrating some of these ideas with your own personal style will help you to stay focused and manage this task to completion.

So you've done everything right so far, and you finally get that call you've been waiting for! You've been selected to interview for a job, now what?





PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

THE MIRROR IS YOUR FRIEND

There's just no getting around it. You have meticulously gone over your resume and written a compelling cover letter. You've stayed organized in the job search and understand the needs and wants of the companies you desire. You may feel like you are already the perfect employee and yet, you still have to go through the job interview.

One of the biggest mistakes that people make in their job interview is coming unprepared. There are many aspects to getting prepared for a job interview and the first starts with getting to know the company. Research information about the company's goals, mission, products, services, and structure. You can usually find this information from the Internet, the public library, professional magazines or from former employees. This knowledge not only shows your interviewer that you are interested in working for their company, but it also helps you to prepare a list of targeted and focused questions which help you to know if you and the company are a good match.

When it comes to interviewing, practice makes perfect. Your next target while preparing for this interview is to practice answering common questions that you anticipate from your interviewer. One of the most common questions is "what are your strengths and weaknesses?" Or "tell us a little bit about yourself." Individuals who arrive at an interview unable to articulate a string of thoughts for these particular questions gives the interviewer the idea that you will be unable to work in a business setting at all. This is because these questions should be anticipated, and if you can't anticipate questions for your interview, you won't be able to anticipate the needs and future of the company.

Preparing for the interview also means understanding what your body language is telling your interviewer. You may have the verbiage down pat but your body language may be giving a whole other impression. For instance, if you arrive chewing gum, it indicates that you feel either much too relaxed or too nervous. If you are sitting back with your back against the back of the chair, it looks as if you're uninterested in what the interviewer is talking about. Sitting too far forward indicates nervousness and eagerness and often becomes uncomfortable for the interviewer.

We recommend that you practice answering questions in the mirror and watching your own body language. Sometimes this can be difficult and doesn't always work well because you're watching yourself at the same time you're answering the question. If you have the option to use a camera, either a digital handheld by your friend or a web cam mounted on your computer, videotape yourself answering questions and going through the interview process. This gives you the opportunity to objectively evaluate your performance after it is already completed.

If you don't have access to a video camera or a tape recorder, then ask a trusted friend to read you the list of interview questions, add a few of their own, and give you feedback at the end of the interview. Write out any questions that you have difficulty with and practice your delivery. This includes your introduction of who you are and why you've arrived as well as saying goodbye to the interviewer.

Preparing for your interview takes a bit of time and diligence, but the efforts are well worth the rewards.

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE INTERVIEW?

Believe it or not, once the interview is finished, there is still more work to do. You cannot just sit back and wait for a job offer. There are actually more strategies that you can employ once the interview is over that will put you over the top of your competition.

At the end of the interview ask the interviewer when they expect to make a hiring decision. This helps you to plan out your after interviews strategy. Following up will give you an edge over your competition. Before arriving for the interview or before leaving, get the correct titles and names of all the people who interviewed you. It's easy to do this when you ask for their business cards. These should have their correct name, job title and address.

Within the first 24 hours write individual thank you notes to each person with whom you interviewed. If you've interviewed with several people, be sure you customize each note to the specific interviewer, making special mention of a specific topic you discussed. Most interviewers will compare notes and see the letter that you sent to the others.

Never fail to send a thank you note, even if you believe the job is not for you or you will not be offered the position. Individuals who have good etiquette may have their names past two other managers or other businesses who are looking for individuals to fill their positions. You can look at each interview as a potential networking possibility.

Quick note here: if your handwriting is worse than your doctor's, then make the effort to have it typed or ask a friend who has great penmanship to write the note for you.

Be very careful with your follow-up letter as this is potentially the last thing they will remember you for before they make their decision. Have someone else proof read the letter to ensure there are no grammatical mistakes or spelling errors.

Be sure your references know they may be contacted in the near future. Although your references are not a complete reflection of you, if they seem unaware that you even gave their name out it does reflect poorly on your ability to be organized and accommodate others.

Once you know the employer's timetable, be sure to call and follow-up within a week to 10 days to ask about the position. This is a perfect opportunity to continue to build rapport and sell your strengths during the call. But remember to also be patient because. The hiring process often takes longer than expected.

With any communication you have with a potential employer, whether it is your thank you note or follow-up phone calls, always be professional. You must be able to communicate your desire for the job as well add your ability to do the job without appearing to be desperate.

Too often companies do not share with you their hiring decision unless you are the person they have hired. Often times they hope you will just give up and go away because they find it too difficult to tell someone that they did not make the cut. If your e-mails or voice mails are not being returned then let it go and presume there is no offer.

This is a great time to remember not to burn your bridges behind you. While you may be disappointed that you didn't get the job or that the company didn't pick up the phone and tell you that you didn't get the job, it is not the time to dash off a scathing letter or send an equally disastrous e-mail. Remember that although you might not have been the right person for this position, potential employees who are courteous, enthusiastic and appear to know their business may be approached for a new position in the near future.



JOB HUNTING MISTAKES AND HOW NOT TO MAKE THEM!

Finding a job in today's job market can sometimes be challenging and difficult. It really doesn't matter about the state of the economy when searching for a job, but rather about avoiding some of the more common job hunting mistakes in order to make you a more desirable candidate for the job opening you want.

Here are some of the top mistakes that job hunters and new college grads make when they begin to look for their new job.

*It is important to make every decision, phone call, letter writing or email a priority in your day. In other words, you must take action. Avoid thinking about what you want to do or complaining about roadblocks to your progress, but instead make your list and check them off.

*Be committed to the job search. When you don't take adequate time to prepare or to search, you are leaving job openings for others who are more committed and diligent.

*Empathize with your employer's perspective. In other words, your future employer has specific needs, time frames and problems that may or may not be compatible with your time frames. Understand that, for the employer, their needs come first.

*Anticipate and practice for your interview. In fact, just doing the research for an interview with your company will increase your chances of achieving success and landing the job. You must be able to relate your abilities to the needs of the company and formulate a strategy for success in the interview. In other words, prepare, prepared, prepare.

*Follow-Up! One of the biggest mistakes that new job hunters make is to not follow with their prospective employer. Send a thank you letter within 24 hours after the interview, even when you believe you will not be asked to fill the position. You can make a name for yourself in what may be a small, closely knit profession or you may make enough of an impression that you are asked back to fill a position later.

*Do not apply for a position that you are obviously not qualified to fill. You are wasting the time of the human resources office and the hiring manager and may again be making a poor impression within your profession.

*Have a professional sounding e-mail address. Many employers today will correspond with you via e-mail. If your e-mail address is cutesy and designed to attract the attention of the opposite sex you are definitely making the wrong impression on your future employers. Instead, get a Gmail account and make it first name.last name@gmail.com.

*Organize, organize, organize. You can never be too organized. You will lose points quickly when the human resources manager or hiring manager calls you at home to nail down a few more points and you are totally confused with whom you are talking. It is good practice to keep a log, notes of interviews, material that you have sent to prospective employers and any customization that was done for each interview.

By avoiding these common job hunting mistakes you significantly increase your chances of being asked back for a second interview or being offered the position. Your attention to detail will be noticed by your prospective employer and the individuals who interview you.



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