

Conscious Careering



Attention, job hunters! It's time to get back to basics...

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Have you joined LinkedIn yet? How about Twitter? Have you converted your résumé into an ASCII plain-text format? What about a PDF version? Got your elevator pitch done? What about your OARS or PARS or STARS success stories? Have you considered building a web résumé? Or even switching to a video résumé, since I hear they're all the rage?

While not to make light of the modern job searching process, or downplay some of the great tools that have emerged in recent years, I'm writing this column to encourage people to "stop the insanity" for a moment and get back to the basics of career transition. For many professionals who are out of work, harking back to the fundamentals (instead of engaging in frenetic, trend-chasing behaviors) will go a long way towards improving their overall search results. It will also save the average job hunter a *significant* bundle of time. Remember, it's always easy to complicate something; it's far harder, but usually more effective, to break things down into a simple set of "first principles" and to let these guide your actions.

On that note, here are the four main activities that job hunters should concentrate on—none of which has changed a lick in the last 50 years.

● **Develop a clear and compelling value proposition.** Even this statement is an overly fancy way of saying "figure out your goals" before you launch your job hunt in earnest. Are you clear about the types of positions you plan to target? Is there evidence that these jobs actually exist? If so, in what numbers and in what kinds of organizations? And at what price point, in terms of compensation?

Any major employment website can answer the above questions for you, if you use it wisely. Your personal contact network can also help validate that your goals are sound and that you're not barking up the wrong tree, career-wise. So make sure that you actually have a winning job concept in mind before you rush out and start trying to promote it to employers!

● **Put your résumé to bed.** Perhaps it's just me, but writing a decent résumé just shouldn't be that hard of a challenge anymore for the modern professional. Not only are there thousands of samples and templates available

via the web, but 90% of your success is going to come down to your specific employment history, anyway, at the end of the day. Sure, you might be able to earn a few brownie points here and there for fancy verbiage and formatting, but the direct relevance of your experience, education, and employment dates is still going to be the key factor that "makes" or "breaks" most résumé submissions. So once you've got the facts down and taken the steps necessary to ensure your document is typo-free, you're probably closer than you think to a final version.

● **Engage in large amounts of outbound activity.** Once you're clear on the types of jobs you're targeting and are comfortable that your résumé is where it needs to be, it's time to hit the gas pedal! The only thing that really counts at this stage is the number of outbound calls, letters, and e-mail submissions you churn out on a daily basis. These are the only activities that have the possibility of generating interviews, after all, so you need to create a disciplined routine for yourself that includes making at least five *relevant* outreach efforts per day to suitable individuals and organizations. Does this number seem like cruel and unusual punishment? If so, you may need to rethink how serious you are about finding work, since you're unlikely to experience much success without showing this level of hustle.

The good news, however, is that we've got a *bazillion* great tools at our disposal today for turning up useful contacts and companies that can help propel one's job search forward!

● **Prep hard for interviews.** Lastly, when the magic moment arrives and you've been invited in to meet with a hiring manager, your preparation efforts, once again, don't need to be terribly sophisticated. Simply study the advertisement, make note of what the company asks for in terms of requirements, and then be ready to speak to these qualifications—and give examples related to each area, when prompted. Also, as a form of simple courtesy if nothing else, you should attempt to find out as much as you can in advance about what the company does, how it makes money, who it competes with, what industry trends it might be facing, and the like.

At the end of the day, while job hunting is not necessarily *easy*, it actually is fairly simple. So be on constant guard of overcomplicating things, chasing short cuts, or diverting your attention in dozens of different and unproductive directions. The four basic principles above will get you pretty darn far, if you stick to them religiously!

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