

Conscious Careering



Don't underestimate the job search process; looking for work is a more complex challenge than meets the eye!

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Are you a fearless salesperson and savvy negotiator? How about a gifted copywriter, technologist, project manager, and/or public relations expert? If you're facing the prospect of conducting a job search in today's market, guess what—you'll likely need to wear all of these different hats, plus a few more!

Throughout my years in the career counseling business, I've noticed that the scope and complexity of the job hunting challenge tends to be chronically underestimated by most professionals. In reality, conducting a full-scale job search is closely akin to managing a massive, multi-disciplinary project, especially if you don't have immediate leads in hand that have been sent to you from friends and associates. As a result, few people have the diversity of skill sets (and innate schizophrenia) to pull the entire project off themselves—and those who take the process lightly, and don't reach out for help, have a good chance of ending up “settling” for a mediocre assignment.

If you're unemployed, therefore, or a working adult about to start looking for a new position, it's important to recognize the multi-faceted nature of the job hunting process right out of the gate. Once you've acknowledged the full range of skills you'll need to be successful, you'll be in a much better position to reach out for assistance in those specific areas where your own talents may not be up to snuff.

For example, consider the step of drafting an effective resume presentation. Unless you are a candidate who happens to possess seasoned experience in the writing and desktop publishing field, this part of the process can easily turn out to be a major obstacle and significant stumbling block in the early phases of your self-marketing campaign. I've seen many professionals, in fact, get stuck for weeks (or even months) stressing over how to package their skills on paper, which ends up delaying the entire range of additional job hunting steps that need to be accomplished. In these situations, your skills as a brilliant accountant or world-class sales manager won't help you much. Even for professional resume writers, it's quite difficult to capture a person's entire range of relevant skills and qualifications within the confines of a page or two.

Therefore, if you find that the resume-writing task is holding you back, or falls outside of your comfort zone, don't let it cost you weeks of precious search time. Get some help, either from a professional resume specialist or from a trusted friend of yours who has strong writing skills and owes you a favor. Reaching out for assistance in this manner will not only save you time and frustration, but will also offset the built-in lack of objectivity each of us has about our own skills, talents, and capabilities—which often causes us to sell ourselves short.

The copywriting element, however, is just one small part of the overall job search equation. At a certain stage of the game, you'll need to take the writing hat off and put on your technology hat, instead. Full-contact job hunting requires advanced market research skills and the ability to locate relevant leads among a sea of over 100,000 employment websites. You'll also need to be a seasoned sales pro, ready to promote yourself in networking conversations and interviews, as well as an unflappable negotiator, able to haggle over salary questions like a pro and smoothly navigate the pathways of the job offer negotiation stage. Any weaknesses in these various areas can, and usually will, “cost you” to a certain degree in terms of the quality of the job opportunity you're eventually able to land.

My point in stressing these different aspects of looking for work, however, is not to make you feel insecure or inadequate, but merely to underscore the variety of disciplines involved in the job acquisition process—and encourage you to seek out help in those areas you're not able or inclined to master yourself. Keep in mind that even Tiger Woods has a golf coach, and by supplementing your own efforts with assistance from outside experts, you'll be far more effective in reaching your goals with a minimum of delay, hassle, and frustration.

What kind of help is available? The short answer is “plenty.” There are thousands of Internet websites, books, and career seminars available offering specific advice on every facet of career exploration and job hunting. In addition, dozens of qualified career counselors are standing by in each major market to provide you with professional support in the areas where you need it most, whether writing your resume, exploring different job options, or assessing the “going rate” of jobs in your current field.

With this broad range of help available, it would be a shame to let a few pesky “weak links” prevent you from reaching your goals!

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