

# Conscious Careering

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## Five Serious Questions Job Hunters Should Ask Themselves

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While it's easy for coaches and counselors to take the "reflective listening" shtick too far, and annoy the hell out of their clients via overuse of the Socratic method, I hope you'll indulge me just this once. Below, I've outlined a few of the more thought-provoking questions that I tend to ask my clients who are going through career transition—with the hope that these questions, and the comments which follow, will help at least a few of you out there achieve some fresh thinking and momentum, if you're on the hunt!

- Do you deserve a great job? I frequently ask this question right out of the gate when I'm teaching job hunting classes. And invariably, when I do so, almost every hand in the room shoots up. Perhaps people feel I'm testing their confidence level. Or that this is a rhetorical question similar to a heavy metal band shouting "are you ready to rock?" to a hyped-up concert crowd. In reality, though, this question allows me to immediately contradict one deadly job search assumption—which is that the market is a "fair" environment or that "deserving" a job has anything to do with the matter. In reality, the best jobs don't go to the most qualified or most deserving candidate, but to the candidates who aggressively sell themselves, outthrust their competition, and fight hard for what they want. So if you're still clinging to any sense of entitlement in terms of your career situation, get over it, or you'll get outmaneuvered every time!

- If you're not having much success, is it because you don't know what to do or simply because you're not doing it? Let's tackle this one by way of analogy. While I've been guilty like most people of complaining about being out of shape, at times, or not being able to fit into my pants anymore, can I really claim with a straight face that I don't know how to solve these problems? Obviously, I know the remedy to these issues would involve eating healthier and working out a lot more. Apparently, I just choose not to do these things, as much as I may whine about the consequences!

Most of the time, the root cause behind an ineffective job search is similar. It's not so much an "I don't know what to do" problem as a confidence or motivational problem, in disguise. There are thousands of books and websites out

there, after all, that explain how job hunting (especially at the senior levels) requires far more than just responding to published job advertisements. It requires getting out of one's comfort zone and engaging in a high-volume regimen of networking, cold-calling, and target company research. So those who protest that "nothing is working" or "there are no jobs out there" are usually engaging in rationalization to avoid doing the things they know, deep down, they need to be doing. Don't let yourself get away with this tomfoolery! If your issue is really a fear of rejection or a lack of motivation, these are the obstacles you should work to overcome.

- Would your job search efforts to date impress an objective third party? Now here's a curious little notion to ponder. If somebody were to audit your job search, and you had to walk them through a list of everything you've been doing to find work, do you think they'd be impressed by your efforts? Would they be blown away by your thoughtful game plan? Would they praise you for your consistent, focused effort? Would the manner in which you've "project-managed" your search be indicative of the way you'd approach their projects, if hired? For a lot of the folks I encounter, I don't think the answers would be affirmative ones. Fix this!

- Are you becoming more marketable or less marketable during your search? While it may be hard to believe, this issue is more under your control than you might think. And if you're unemployed and know you'll automatically be losing a little "résumé steam" with each passing month, it's even more critical you take active steps to shore up your marketability. How is this done? By researching the most pressing, sought-after qualifications in your field and then aggressively acquiring them via training, self-study, and/or volunteerism. Remember, you've likely got more time on your hands than people working full-time, so no excuses—get busy!

- When's the last time you impressed yourself? Last but not least, if you don't believe in the product you're selling (aka "you") at the end of the day, it's going to be awfully hard to convince anybody else. So if you've been taking some serious broadsides to your self-confidence lately, it's imperative you take immediate steps to address this matter. Set a personal "stretch" goal (e.g. losing 10 pounds, learning a new language, training for a mini-triathlon...) and don't rest until you achieve it. Nothing (short of a new job, perhaps...) will help you regain your sense of self-worth more quickly!

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