

Conscious Careering



Job hunters: would your efforts to find work impress an outside observer?

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One fascinating paradox I've observed about the job market? It's that many professionals who pride themselves on being highly organized, resourceful, and results-oriented fail to apply these exact same success characteristics when the time comes to tackle yet another form of professional challenge—finding employment.

For example, you'll often find that the folks touting "creativity" on their résumés are relying on the same shopworn job-finding tactics as everybody else. Or you'll see expert project managers failing to design and follow even a rudimentary job search plan, complete with milestones and metrics. Or you'll come across marketing managers relying entirely on the web to find leads, even though they'd never dream of building a corporate marketing plan around a single "channel" of this kind, themselves.

The reason for this? It's hard to say, but it's likely either the result of people not being used to viewing the unemployment challenge as yet another professional puzzle they have to solve—or it's due to the lack of accountability that's inherently part of the process. Without a boss breathing down our necks, demanding results, it can be difficult to motivate ourselves to excel and function at our professional best.

In light of this reality, one line of questioning I frequently use to help my clients kick their search into another gear is: "Would you be eager/proud/excited to stride into an employer or recruiter's office and walk them through the efforts you've been making to find work? Do you think they'd be likely to hire you, based on a review of how you're going about approaching your *current* professional challenge?"

Now if you can AFFORD to be comfortably out of work for a while, this issue might not be that big of a deal. But if you're like a lot of people out there, seriously in need of a paycheck, it might be time to find that "next gear" and attack this challenge with every professional success trait you have at your disposal. If you're a naturally creative person, you might strive to come up with some innovative ways to promote yourself, versus doing the same old stuff as everybody else. If you're an organizational wizard, consider building a methodical job-finding game plan packed with measurable action steps and

productivity goals. And if you're an analytical guru, carefully track all of the steps you're taking and do some A/B testing to figure out which methods are producing the best results.

In other words, act as if, hypothetically, your job hunting activities will be fully subject to review by your next employer and used as a make-or-break element in hiring you. This will benefit you in at least three ways:

First of all, I believe (as per the best-selling *StrengthsFinder* book series) that as we grow up, our brains become wired with unique personal success patterns for solving problems. If you embrace these same time-tested gifts and talents in the job search process, as you've always done before, when hired, you'll be playing to your strengths and much more likely to achieve positive results.

Second, I believe that action speaks louder than words. Future employers, as well as your networking contacts, will be watching closely to see how you respond to the unemployment challenge—and will provide far more assistance if they see you taking active steps to solve the problem you're facing, versus retreating into a passive stance laden with traces of confusion, bitterness, or victimhood.

Lastly, if you run your job hunt in a way that's likely to impress others, there's an awfully good chance you'll end up impressing yourself along the way, as well. This can provide a significant jump-start to your confidence, since as many wise people throughout history have observed, the most authentic source of self-esteem is the knowledge, deep down, that you're doing your best and pushing yourself to your full potential. Strive to run the BEST job search campaign you possibly can each day, and you'll be able to look yourself in the mirror and know, if nothing else, that you're leaving it all out there.

So again, if you're one of the many Americans currently in the process of looking for work, ask yourself what "grade" your job search would likely receive from an objective reviewer. Are you an "A" student who is truly getting out of your comfort zone, each day, and working hard to turn up opportunities? Are you a "C" student simply going through the motions and skating by doing the same things as anybody else? Or would your search warrant a grade (gulp!) that's even a little further down the scale?

Tough question, I know, but one that might be worth asking if your job hunt is stuck in a bit of a rut. Operate as if your search itself is a work product that's going to be "audited" along the way, and trust me, the better you'll fare!

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