Creative Job Search: Job Search Preparation

A successful job search requires organization and effort. You cannot simply walk out the door and wander around asking about jobs. Nor can you look for work only when you feel like it or when it is convenient. Planning and organizing are critical to job search success. For those who are accustomed to self-directed activities, this will not be difficult. But for those who are used to having someone else organize their activities, this will require mastering new skills. You may not consider yourself an organized person but you can learn this skill. Organizing your job search will save you time and effort. Good self-management and organization skills are valuable resources no matter what your experience might be.

You will need to develop a new routine to be successful in your job search. You may have to create a new set of priorities and schedules. Be aware that there will be many things that will distract you. Just about anything will sound better than looking for work. Don’t be fooled; your number one priority is finding that new job. Don’t let anything get in your way.

Organizing a Job Search

Time and Job Hunting

Before we look at the finer points of organizing a job search, we need to make something clear: looking for work is hard work! It takes time and energy to be successful. If you only spend a few hours a week looking for work, you will probably remain
unemployed for a long time. When you are employed, how much time do you spend on the job? 20 hours? 30 hours? Most of us work a 40-hour week. If you are unemployed, those hours are available for your job search. Be consistent in the amount of time you spend each week looking for a job. Don't spend 40 hours one week and then nothing for the next two weeks! The hardest part is getting started. Once you get the momentum into your search, you will want to keep it moving forward.

Don't think of yourself as unemployed. You have a job, a full-time job. You are engaged in a very calculated sales and marketing campaign designed to sell your skills and experience to a prospective employer. You are now self-employed; you are the boss. It's up to you to make sure the job gets done. Set your schedule and stick to it. The only reasons you would not conduct your job search would be the same reasons you would use for not going to work.

**Advance Scheduling**

Successful job seekers have mastered the art of managing their schedules. Job search scheduling and goal setting should be done daily and weekly. *Establish measurable goals.* For example, block out the hours you have committed to the search and identify what you plan to accomplish. If you set 9-11 a.m. Monday for library research, your goal could be to identify 10 new employers you can pursue for employment leads. Tuesday's goal could be contacting the 10 new employers you identified Monday. Tuesday, 1-3 p.m. is scheduled for making direct telephone contacts. Be realistic but challenge yourself.

**Make Yourself Accountable**

Check your progress at the end of each day and week. See if you accomplished your goals. When you do, commend yourself and decide if you can set tougher goals next time. If you didn't accomplish the goals, explore why and decide what you need to do to succeed in the future. Maybe your goals were not realistic; you tried to do too much. Learn from this and plan more realistic goals for the future. It may be a good strategy to involve
someone else in your search. Attend a job club. Talk with a trusted friend; give them permission to hold you accountable to your plans.

**Keep Accurate Records**

If you are conducting a serious job campaign, you may make hundreds of contacts and generate new opportunities daily. You need to develop and maintain a filing system and not rely on your memory. There is a variety of systems you can use; the choice is yours. Just keep it easy to use and maintain.

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