

Five Dumb Things People Do To Mess Up Their Career Search

By Tracy A. Bumpus, CPRW, JCTC

1. They don't think ahead.

One of the most common mistakes, lack of forward planning, is a major hurdle in job and career transition. People who make this dumb mistake fail to think further than the end of the week regarding their entire careers. These are the people who get hit hardest by layoffs and reorganizations. They haven't given thought to where they are driving their careers or what road they will take. They are in "D" on the gearshift, but are severely jolted by detour signs and large potholes in the road. Common mentality—"It can't happen to me."

Remedy for this mistake: write out a formal plan for your career that encompasses three time periods—6 months from the present, 12 months from the present, and 3 years from the present. For each time period, state goals and objectives and then detail a plan for meeting those goals and objectives.

Have a "What If" plan (a.k.a. Contingency Plan) for the following:

- Unexpected layoff or release
- Disability
- Major industry shift in direction or market shift
- Promotion freeze
- Job burnout
- Sudden change in family dynamics

Keep the résumé updated and the personal network warm at all times.

2. They do not take a proactive approach to job search.

People who make this dumb mistake are "fishers." They feel they can throw their résumé out onto the net, tie the line to their big toe, and go to sleep and a BIG MONEY DEAL that is exactly what they want will instantly take the bait. WRONG! Hard, fast, basic truths about job search:

It's hard work.

It takes time.

You get out of it what you put into it.

Your attitude shows in everything you do.

3. They don't invest themselves.

Notice I didn't say they invest money. While the average job search budget is about 1% of the targeted minimum salary, the time and effort that someone invests in the job search is most valuable. People who make this stupid mistake go about things halfway. They get by with the minimum—minimum effort, minimum planning, minimum

cost, and minimum enthusiasm. And guess what such people receive?
MINIMUM RESULTS!

4. They procrastinate.

I recently had a client who finally got the revisions to the first draft of his résumé back to me 13 MONTHS after I originally delivered it to him. Procrastination leads to crisis living. Life is just one big deadline with major disasters looming for people who procrastinate. Procrastinating in career planning and job search results in:

Lost opportunities
Poor approach
Slow career progression

5. They don't educate themselves.

People who make this mistake don't keep up with industry changes that affect their career much less marketing their career. They often bury themselves in their company environment or just in their department and lose sight of where the industry as a whole is heading. As a result, they often find themselves woefully behind the times in skills and knowledge, not only within their career fields but also about how to change jobs.

Job search is like any other concept—it has been revolutionized by the advent of technology, especially the Internet. If you don't understand how those changes affect how a job search is conducted (and don't hire a consultant to help you with it), you are at a distinct disadvantage.

Case in point: I recently had a client who had been with IBM for 35 years in a very, very specialized niche. He decided he was ready to make a move to another company but he was virtually unmarketable due to his age, lack of broader industry knowledge, and the fact that only two or so other companies in the entire world needed people with his particular expertise. He only knew internal terminology for processes and products and couldn't relate his job to other companies or other positions. He also thought his résumé should be 14 pages long and should describe in detail his entire, project-laden work history with Big Blue. He was not open to taking advice concerning his job search even though he was paying for such advice. Unless he educated himself or opened himself to being educated, he faced failure in his career transition.

Learn how to use technology in your job search. It's no longer an option. Learn how to:

Network online
Decipher an online job advertisement
Successfully post your résumé online
Determine which job boards are your best bets

Market your career successfully

####

Copyright, 2002. RezAMAZE.com. All rights reserved.

Tracy Bumpus, CPRW, JCTC is Executive Director of RezAMAZE.com, a career services firm that specializes in working with professionals in the high tech and engineering industries. Mrs. Bumpus has been published in six national best-selling job search books and has written for the National Business Employment Weekly and Contract Professional. Mrs. Bumpus can be contacted through her web site at <http://www.rezamaze.com> or via email at tbumpus@rezamaze.com.