

A Positive Outlook on Job Opportunity

By Peter K. Studner, Career Counselor

No one likes the experience of being terminated or laid off from a job. Even if it was a relief to finally be out of a bad work situation, the prospect of looking for that next job brings on lots of emotions, most of which are negative: possible failure, fear of the unknown, fear of not having a paycheck, not knowing where to begin, fear of rejection... all leading to a form of paralysis/inactivity or at best, procrastination. Many job-seekers retreat to just sending out résumés, answering advertisements, and writing to companies and recruiters, thus spending 80% of their time on only 15% of the opportunities. Considering today's recession, that 15% is more like 5% as the number of companies recruiting new people has fallen off considerably. Reports coming from the recruiter community are that there are no job orders coming in.

What to do?

The key to getting past negative feelings and inactivity is preparation. The vast majority of job-seekers and career-changers, while loaded with degrees, certificates, diplomas and licenses, haven't had any significant training in what a good job-search campaign consists of. Little wonder the prospect of having to go through a job search is dreaded.

Effective job-search techniques can be learned. Preparation for your job search or career change should include:

Career Assessment

Before embarking on any job search, decide what skills you have to offer to your next employer. Next, validate that there is a market for your skills. Do not look for a job until you ascertain that the job exists in the market you want to prospect. Many job seekers make the serious mistake of skipping this validation process and wind up spending weeks and months looking for a job that does not exist.

Accomplishments

The backbone of any job search is a strong list of accomplishments. It is difficult selling yourself by just telling people what you do. With accomplishments, you can relate what you have done by deeds. Your references will provide the credibility. You are no longer seeking a job, rather a home for your skills. You are a solution seeking a problem.

Résumé

Your calling card. Résumés would be better called marketing brochures. After all, we are using them to sell our skills to future employers. Résumés do not get jobs; people do – so you must become your résumé. Without a clear understanding of all you can contribute to a future employer, you will have a tough time making the sale. The best résumés are loaded with accomplishments.

Market Plan

How to go after all the jobs: recruiters, advertisements, bulletin boards, hotlines, Internet listings and the not so obvious: the hidden job market where more than 75% of jobs come from.

Networking

Getting out and meeting people who can lead you to the hidden job market. Fortunately, anyone can learn the techniques of what it takes to become a good networker.

Telephoning for Appointments

If you have never learned how to make calls for job-related and networking appointments, it will be difficult without training. Telemarketing yourself does not have to be a drag if you know how; these techniques can be learned.

Interviewing

The art of learning what the market needs and addressing those needs with your skills. If you have awkward interviews or feel that you just don't know where to start in an interview, you need to stop long enough to learn the techniques of what goes into a good interview. There are three basic interviews used in a job search or career change: The Research Interview where you are seeking information about people, careers, industries, or companies, The Advice Interview where you are seeking referrals to your target companies (companies you want to work for) and the Direct Interview where you are face-to-face with someone who could have an interest in hiring you (provided you can make the sale).

Negotiating a Win-Win Salary

Learn the art of negotiating a salary based on what a job is worth, not a previous paycheck. It starts with determining what the job is worth on the market considering the economy, number of people looking for the same job, their level of experience and what employers currently are willing to pay.

All of the above job search elements can be learned in just a few hours of concentrated time. At the end of the day, the key to taking the fear out of job search is preparation. The more prepared you are, the less anxiety and stress you will have. Arm yourself with know-how and a plan, and you will be on the road to getting yourself back into the job market, perhaps even with a more productive job that has feel-good qualities.

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Peter K. Studner is a career counselor, former chief executive of international companies. He is the author of the award-winning manual, *Super Job Search*, Jamenair Ltd. Now in its third edition with more than 200,000 copies sold. Studner is president of Peter K. Studner Associates, Inc., an outplacement firm, located in California. For additional vital job-search resources, consult: www.SuperJobSearch.com

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