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Biggest Mistakes
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Job Seekers Make

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This booklet is dedicated to you, the job seeker. We understand that you want more than a job—you want a rewarding career. And, you're willing to work hard to get that career. Perhaps your job search has stalled. You keep trying different avenues to get interviews and offers, but keep hitting dead ends. If this sounds like you, read on. Let us help you shorten your job search and improve the quality of offers you get.

Are you making any of the following mistakes?



Lack of Focus

The Problem: You want to “stay open to possibilities” and are hoping employers will see where you fit into their organization. Your resume has a vague objective and lists your background without customization. You insist that you’ll be an asset to anyone who hires you so you don’t focus on a specific employment target. To the employer, you look like a “job shopper” and your search goes on for months.

The Solution: Complete a self-assessment process. This can be accomplished by taking Elevations for Career Choice and Career Change found at www.ElevateYourCareer.com, by working with a qualified career coach or by attending workshops taught by a qualified career development professional. Know yourself very well and find out what jobs match your natural abilities. Target your resume and your interview answers, letting the employer know that you have done your homework.

Job Search Without a Plan

The Problem: You wake up every morning and wonder—what am I going to do today to land that great job? It's overwhelming. You could look at the Internet job sites, go to a local job fair or call your best friend who always listens to you no matter what. Let's face it, you don't have a plan and your job search is going nowhere.

The Solution: Once you have overcome mistake number one, lack of focus, you can tackle number two, the lack of a plan. Your clear identification of a target industry and function allows you to identify the people you need to meet and communicate with.

You should identify at least 50 or more companies in your geographic area that could hire you, if they had an opening. Then decide how you are going to let those companies know you are available. Perhaps you send a customized cover letter and a resume and follow up with a phone call a week later. Explain your interest in their company and ask for a meeting.

Meanwhile, attend professional association meetings and events that will get you in touch with the people you need to meet. Use multiple avenues to reach potential employers. Do not rely on any single approach. Set goals for the number of hours you will spend each day on your search and how many contacts you will make each week. Soon you will build momentum and quality offers will follow.

Writing Your Resume As a First Step

The Problem: Oh boy, here we go again.... it all goes back to mistake number one. You can't write your resume until you know what you want to do.

Perhaps you think you are getting off to a great start by hiring some flashy resume service. Believe me, it's a waste of your time and your money!

Recruiters can spot a professionally developed resume and it goes in the wastebasket. They want a well thought out resume that reflects your personality and talents

The Solution: Start with your self-assessment and then research potential employment targets. Once you know what you want, you can look at your previous accomplishments and match them with the requirements of your prospective employer. Then write a resume that will get the employers to call you first.

If you feel like you need some help with your resume, take a workshop or read a book. Then, you might want to hire someone to review your draft and make improvements, as a finishing touch. This saves you money and ensures that your resume reflects who you really are.

Getting in Front of People Before Doing Your Research

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The Problem: If you are like a lot of job seekers, you pulled out your hand held computer or roll-a-dex as soon as you hit the job hunt trail. You dialed those numbers and asked for jobs. You hit up the few big decision makers you knew, hoping they would hook you up with a great opening. Basically, you sounded needy and, yes, unfocused. You “burnt your network”. Now it’s hard to go back.

The Solution: Well, first, if you have not burnt your network, don’t do that! Generally you want to do all your reading and Internet research first. Learn about the industry trends. Find job descriptions that match your goals and skills. Learn the key words and cultural elements of your target market. Prepare a thirty-second statement that explains what you want to do and why you are qualified. Your first calls should be to the less influential people. Practice on them. Ask them who else you should be talking to. Work your way up to the best contacts you have. Be very prepared before you talk to the powerful folks on your list.

If you ran through your network too early, re-connect starting, as I mentioned before, with the bottom of your contact list. Explain that your focus has been refined and you’d like to update them on your progress. And, be sure to ask them who else you should be talking to. This will help expand your network and get you back into the game with a fresh start.

Jumping Into the First Thing that Comes

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The Problem: The unemployment rate can be sobering (especially if you listen to the news or read the newspaper) but it rarely reflects all the details of your particular situation. So, while it is tough to find a really good job, there are jobs to be found. If you are a worrier (and who is not) you might just take the first thing that comes along. Maybe you accept more travel than you really want or a lower salary. Before you know it, another five years has gone by and all you've got to show for it is more grey hair.

The Solution: Let's face it, job-hunting is scary and can cause you to pull the trigger too fast. If you need money right away, consider temporary employment or contract work in your field but don't under-employ yourself. If your job search is becoming prolonged, hire a qualified professional to help you. Every month that you go without a salary, you are losing a lot more than it would cost to hire a good coach.

Not Following Up

The Problem: You have to take the initiative, even in the face of possible rejection. And, if you are human, that sounds about as fun as a root canal. But, let me assure you that lack of follow up is at the bottom of most stalled job hunts.

The Solution: Know that every letter, every meeting and every interview will require timely, thoughtful follow up. Standard letters, done quickly, may be worse than no follow up at all. Take the time to think about ways to bring up your positive attributes. Show your good manners and excellent communication skills. Ask for another meeting, if it seems appropriate. Keep the door open and find ways to be helpful to everyone in your network.

Taking a Break

The Problem: I can hear it now; you are sick of your job search. All you want is a lounge chair on a beach in Hawaii. And, low and behold your best buddy is going next week and he asks you to join him. Well, you've been really busting your rear end on this search so you figure you deserve a break. You head off for a week and plan to pick up where you left off when you return.

So what's the big deal, you ask. Well it's called momentum. A good job search is strategic and builds on itself. It's much like running a marathon. While you get more and more tired, the option of stopping and then starting again mid-stream is insane. When you walk away from your search, you miss events and do not follow up in a timely manner. You miss a week of job postings and are not there for that one really important phone call.

The Solution: If you are working and conducting a search, plan to spend about ten hours each week on your job hunt. If you are unemployed, you should spend about thirty hours a week on your search. There are no breaks! If an emergency comes up, realize that you will lose a lot of ground while you are busy doing something else.

Being Disorganized

The Problem: Job search is messy. It involves lots of paperwork and important detailed information. The person who gets the good job will be the one who answered the phone promptly, did not get lost on the way to the interview and spelled the hiring manager's name right. The devil is in the details. Your job search will go on and on if you don't get organized.

The Solution: Set up a simple contact management system. Have a professional phone message and decide where (in your house or office) you will be most productive and organize that space.



Isolation

The Problem: It is easier to hide in your apartment or den than it is to face the strangers at the local chamber of commerce meeting. Even if you are a social butterfly, the inevitable cold calls that go along with job search can be intimidating. So, you find yourself spending a lot of time behind the computer. You e-mail rather than call. And, soon you find yourself lacking energy and feeling sad. You begin to regret your decision to launch this career transition. Guess what, you are getting depressed. It's very common and normal but it can be avoided. Read on.

The Solution: Avoid isolation in both the exploration and job search phases of your career transition. Find a reason to meet with someone every day. Take up a volunteer job to keep you involved in your community for five or ten hours a week. Put together a job-hunting group and have them meet in your living room. Do whatever it takes to keep connecting. Depression, as you might imagine, really slows down your search so prevention is the best medicine!

Mistake #

Listening to the Wrong People

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The Problem: Mistake number ten is related to mistake number nine. There are lots of negative people in the world and sometimes they are members of your own family. If you listen to people who are fearful or lacking self-confidence, they will lay all their garbage on you. They say things like, “be satisfied with what you’ve got.” “The grass is never greener on the other side.” And, “there really are no good job any more these days.” Yikes, with that kind of input, you’ll never get the great job you deserve.

The Solution: Hang out with cheerleaders.... no, I don’t meet the ones at the football games. Stay in touch with people who think highly of you. Seek out role models, people you admire. Read inspirational books and let people know you need their support.

In the end, you have talents that need to be utilized. You want to live up to your potential. There is no reason why you cannot have the job you’ve always dreamed of. But, you’ll have to avoid the common mistakes that most job seekers make in order to get there.



ELEVATIONS
THE CAREER DISCOVERY TOOL

Elevations for Career Choice and Career Change is easy, fun, reasonably priced and powerful. It will help you assess your career-related values, skills, interests and personality. It will link you with jobs that are new and exciting. You can have a new goal and a new life.

Visit: www.ElevateYourCareer.com.

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