

## FIVE PITFALLS TO AVOID FOR JOB HUNTING SUCCESS

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If you are unemployed, underemployed, or unhappily employed, avoiding these five pitfalls will increase your job hunting success:

- ✚ **DON'T BE CASUAL ABOUT YOUR CAREER.** Take charge of managing your career instead of leaving it to your supervisor and the company's human resources department. While harsh, it is an economic reality that they consider you as a resource to be used in providing goods or services to the marketplace. If there is a way to get things done more efficiently without you, or if your employer encounters adverse economic conditions, or just decides to make some organizational changes, the company's interests will necessarily be served rather than yours.

The days of relying on an employer to satisfy job needs, let alone career needs, have long since passed. People can no longer count on beginning and ending a career 40 or 50 years later with retirement from the same company. Career entitlement no longer exists, even in federal employment, and it is now up to you to actively manage you career.

- ✚ **DON'T SHORTCHANGE YOURSELF.** Often people think "What could I possibly do? I'll never be able to find the kind of job I want. I'm stuck here forever." This sort of reasoning is just not correct and can easily become a self-fulfilling prescription for failure.

There are no career "Changes," just career **transitions!** For example, let's look at a school teacher who wants to do something else outside the field of education. A teacher really has a lot to offer in the job marketplace: teachers like to work with and help others; they are educated and experienced in solving problems; they are good trainers and motivators; and they are good communicators accustomed to speaking in front of groups, as well as one-on-one.

Now, let's transfer these sorts of skills and see what happens. An expanding and always-important career field is that of customer service. It's not easy to keep customers today, so there are lots of organizations out there interested in customer service-oriented people; that is, people who can communicate intelligently and like to work with others and be helpful. Other target areas might include customer service supervision or training where skills like group presentations, motivating, and problem-solving are essential.

Too many people don't give themselves enough credit for the skills they have. They seem to have tunnel vision about themselves and focus on only one thing; what they have done in the past. In truth, most people really do have transferable skills valuable to the marketplace.

- ✚ **DON'T IGNORE YOUR PACKAGING.** An easy way to understand the concept of packaging is to think of a common, everyday item, something like toothpaste. If you go to a store to buy some toothpaste, you typically will see a generic brand, along side an array of heavily promoted brands. Which one will you buy? Chances are you will buy the one you think has the most "zing." That's the one with the catchy jingle or eye-catching box; the one with the testimonials, studies, and surveys; the one with the promises of a brighter smile and fresher breath.

It doesn't matter much to you that the brand you selected costs more than the store brand even though there is little, if any, real difference. Rather, it was the overall promotional package that made you decide.

The same holds true in packaging yourself to succeed in the job market. Try to highlight your measured accomplishments and remember that your resume is your box label. You need to separate yourself from the competition by promoting yourself. Identify organizations you feel could use your skills and tell them what you can do.

Think of yourself as a valuable product in the market, a product that will benefit from good promotional packaging. Overcome any feelings of rejection, because each “no” only moves you nearer to the next “yes.” Toothpaste manufacturers know that persistency pays off in the long run and this is also true in the job market.

✚ **DON'T BE A ONE-STOP SHOPPER.** This is especially important because so many people seem to have serious misconceptions about how to conduct a successful employment search. The unadvertised job market in the United States accounts for 75 to 85 percent of the overall market. People who rely solely on employment agencies, executive search firms, or print and electronic advertisements in newspapers and Internet job boards will miss the largest part of the market. In fact, these sources cover only 15 to 25 percent of the real job marketplace.

The informed job seeker isn't a one-stop shopper; rather, he or she pursues several different avenues at the same time to tap the informal or unadvertised market. This simultaneous, multiple-market approach increases the probability of success in a shorter amount of time. This is because the individual is exposed to many more possibilities than would otherwise be possible.

✚ **DON'T FOLLOW THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE.** If you are unsure about how to approach the job market, make an investment in having professional people help you. This could be a good support group or a career marketing and consulting firm. It might seem a little easier at first to take shortcuts but, as is usually the case, the path of least resistance leads to the place of least results.

Few people really know how to market themselves into a new career. A U.S. Census Bureau survey found that 65 percent of unemployed individuals spent less than five hours a week on their job searches; only 13 percent spent more than 16 hours a week. So, for the rest of us it takes an initial investment in time and effort to learn the best methods and the right packaging, and then it takes research, planning, and hard work. In the end it will have all been worth it, though, because you will have found what you want.



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