

Time to update your résumé and (re)launch your search?

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With Career Directors International declaring September as “International Update Your Résumé Month,” kids returning to school, and the fall hiring season beginning, it’s a good time to dust off your résumé and stay abreast of effective job search strategies in today’s market.

How long does a job search take? I wish there was a formula to predict this, but the success of each candidate’s job search depends on numerous factors. However, the better prepared you are, the more likely you are to shorten the length of your search. Selecting an objective for which you are qualified, creating a strong and targeted résumé, sharpening your interviewing skills, and exhausting all search options, will help get your foot in the door and land that job sooner.

As of May 2009, the average unemployed person spent 22.5 weeks without a job, up from just under 17 weeks a year earlier (Source: U.S. Department of Labor). Another recent survey suggested professional and executive searches took one month for every \$20,000 the candidate earned in annual salary in their former position. There is no question a job search is a long and often laborious process, and with the thought of months of searching on the horizon, I’m sure you’ll agree taking a proactive approach is not an option but a necessity.

So, how do you shorten the length of your search?

Define an Appropriate Objective – If you are not sure of your career goals, perform some research, ask your friends about their professions, or even try to shadow someone in your field of interest. If you are changing careers, be sure to clearly identify your transferable skills as a hiring manager won’t have time to relate past experiences to current interests. Don’t get trapped into creating a one-size-fits-all résumé, instead define a primary objective and refocus your résumé to meet the needs of alternate goals.

Perform Keyword Mapping – Do you know the keywords that will compel your audience to act? If not, start mapping keywords by looking through a sampling of target job postings and identifying the skills, experiences, and education required for the majority of positions you are seeking. Next, reference your own offerings against this desired list of qualifications. The qualifications you possess will serve as the keywords you need to incorporate into your résumé. The qualifications you identified as desired, yet ones you do not possess, become your potential disqualifiers. These are the items you need to handle carefully, being sure your résumé and cover letter do not inadvertently highlight one of your potential disqualifiers.





Develop a “Value-Based” Résumé – Your résumé has to sell your value to a hiring manager. Don’t develop a résumé that simply serves as a narrative of everything you have ever done. Instead, prioritize engagements, responsibilities, and achievements based on your objective, making sure you are marketing your candidacy effectively and answering the hiring manager’s question of why they should interview you. Follow up-to-date protocols in formatting your résumé, beginning with a qualifications summary not an objective statement. The summary should tell the hiring manager about your core qualifications, experiences, and achievements

that position you to perform in your profession of choice. Remember, recent studies estimate the screening process to be as short as 7 seconds, so this summary is critical in getting your foot in the door.

Diversify Your Search – Job boards, print ads, recruiters, temp agencies, job fairs, and networking are all necessary elements of an effective search. If you don't have an extensive network, think about joining a professional organization, community group, or professional group on a social networking site such as LinkedIn. And, don't forget to use the cold contact approach, contacting employers of interest whether they have an opportunity posted or not.

Prepare for the Interview – Give your friends and family members your résumé and have them "quiz" you on different aspects of your career. Develop scripts for the questions you have struggled with in past interviews. Record yourself so you can watch your mock interview and analyze your verbal and non-verbal communication. And, never turn down an opportunity to interview. The more practice you get the more confident you will be when the interview for your dream job comes along.

Remain Positive – While this might be easier said than done, it is critical you remain positive during your search. Keeping a good attitude will help maximize your success with the opportunities you are presented with.

 <p>Dog Pool Party</p> <p>Dog Pool Party at Westwood Water Park, Sunday, Aug. 30, 2009, in Norman, Okla. Photos by Sarah Phipps</p> <p>7 photos</p>	 <p>Cardboard boat regatta</p> <p>Individuals and organizations compete in boats made entirely cardboard during the Cardboard Boat Regatta at Arcadia Lake in Edmond, OK.</p>	 <p>"Opera Idol": Friday, August 29, 2009</p> <p>"Opera Idol" in the Catlett Music Center at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.</p> <p>12 photos</p>	 <p>Sen. Edward M. Kennedy dies at 77</p> <p>Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, one of the most influential senators in U.S. history, died Tuesday night at his home on Cape Cod after a year-long</p>
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