



Ten common job search mistakes

The weak economic environment has created a tough job market. Yet, people are being hired. So, if you're currently in this market, how's your search progressing? "Stalled, stuck in the mud," you say. Well, perhaps this column will shed a bit of light in your tunnel. In my experience as a career coach, résumé writer and consultant, I have witnessed numerous mistakes job seekers make. Below are 10 of the most common mistakes I've seen, coupled with some tips for successfully navigating the search.

1. Lack of commitment. Searching for a job is a job in itself. It's hard work. Applying for a job here and there while hoping for the best, though, is not a winning formula. You need to commit a certain number of hours and do something every day, i.e., connect with someone in your network, search online job boards, research and call companies in your industry, follow up on résumés you've already sent. Most importantly, make a concerted effort to stay positive throughout the process.

2. Failure to network. Think that contacting others will be a burden to them? Absolutely not. Generally, people want to help. Friends, acquaintances, colleagues and others you know can help you develop job leads. You never know when someone will have that perfect lead just for you.

3. Poorly written or designed cover letter and résumé. If your documents are missing the mark, you will not get a callback. Your cover letter should highlight your skill set and strengths that show you are a good match for the job. The résumé should be results-

oriented, and show key responsibilities and accomplishments that tune in to the position for which you are applying.

4. One-size-fits-all résumé strategy. Avoid creating one generic résumé for targeting multiple objectives. It is not uncommon in today's job market to have several résumés and cover letters, each customized to a specific position and highlighting the respective accomplishments and key responsibilities.

5. No diversity in your job search. Restricting yourself to online job boards and classified ads can be a huge mistake. Diversify your job search. Consider other effective strategies—networking, recruiters, job fairs, targeted mail contacts with companies, calling employers, etc. And, keep in mind that the old-fashioned method of simply visiting a prospective employer can still be a viable option.

6. Lack of planning and focus. When you fail to plan, you plan to fail. In addition, with a lack of focus, you may have a difficult time finding a job. Liken the job search to a marketing campaign with you as the product. Focus on the types of jobs in which you are interested, and then develop a game plan that will guide your actions to achieving your goals.

7. Monitoring system nonexistent. Not having a system to track your efforts can cause lots of wasted time. For example, which version of your résumé is getting the most responses? What job search strategy is generating the most interviews? Additionally, keep a log of when

résumés were sent, dates of follow-up, callbacks, etc. This process will enable you to observe how your job search is progressing, and to make adjustments as necessary.

8. Ineffective online presence. Are you using Facebook or LinkedIn? If so, how is it working? To enable these social networking Web sites to work for you in the job search process, make sure your information is professional, with relevant material about your strengths and accomplishments in your areas of expertise.

9. Résumé posted at hundreds of job sites. This strategy can certainly be self-defeating. Because you are unable to customize your résumé for a specific job opportunity, your chances of being called can be greatly reduced. It's better to find "niche" sites that relate to your profession/industry. An interesting Web site to try is www.findingjobsonline.com.

10. Poor or no follow-up. Being passive instead of proactive in today's competitive market will not get you the job. As appropriate, follow up with a call or e-mail. Be ready to discuss your interest in the job and the qualifications that make you a good fit.

Searching for a job is generally never easy, regardless of your experience. Yet, knowing some of the mistakes to avoid can help move you in the right direction to conducting a search that can be both successful and rewarding.

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