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NEXTMOVES

Work smarter, not harder, at finding a new job



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Every day we are bombarded with information from a growing number of sources. The pace of technological innovation allows us to receive news anywhere we happen to be. Headlines tend to dwell on the negative, particularly regarding the job market. For those seeking employment, this news can be more than discouraging. It can be immobilizing.

As a career and outplacement counselor, I have the opportunity to help individuals faced with this dilemma. One by one, I meet and get to know them as individuals, learning about their work histories, families, interests and how they are coping with job loss. Ranging from recent college grads to mature baby boomers, they all face the same challenge: landing a job. Although the job market may be weak, they discover there are actions they can take to increase their odds. The key is a shift to thinking about the future and focusing on possibilities, not obstacles.

When seeking employment, your job is to land a job. Being sidetracked by negative messages will obscure your view of the future. That future depends on what you do now. Based on my experience, the single trait that separates successful job seekers from others is the ability to take action. The good news is that there are unlimited actions you can take. I will share a variety of simple,

strategic activities and valuable resources to get you in motion.

ACTION 1: Start by making an action plan for each week. Spending every day in front of a computer applying for jobs is easy, but not particularly effective. Plus it isolates you. So when designing your plan, include time for online searches, but limit that to one or two hours a day.

ACTION 2: Set up alerts on job search engines to receive daily e-mails with links to jobs that meet your criteria. This will allow you to concentrate on a more productive use of your valuable time. I recommend using www.indeed.com, a powerful aggregator that searches most other job-search websites as well as individual companies' job postings, providing a comprehensive list of opportunities for you. Daily alerts will streamline your online search.

ACTION 3: Do your research. Every week, review event calendars in business newspapers to find events of interest, and register for them. You can choose from a variety of networking groups, seminars or meetings hosted by professional associations.

Be sure to keep up with your industry by reading trade journals and stay informed of current business events by reading newspapers and magazines. Also sign up for online alerts for relevant industry news. Staying current is vital. The information you glean will help you converse while networking and will make you stand out in interviews.

ACTION 4: Tap into other resources offering events that bring people to-

gether. Your public library is a valuable, often-overlooked resource, and most of its offerings are free. Need to improve your computer skills? Most libraries offer classes on key applications such as Microsoft Excel and Word. Fast forward to a future job interview, where you are asked the dreaded question, "What have you been doing since you left your last job?" You will be able to say, "I've been brushing up on my computer skills."

Check out adult and continuing education classes in local public schools and colleges. These are plentiful and feature instruction on diverse topics. How about learning a foreign language or attending a program on green initiatives? You never know who you might meet and who they know. Also participating in classes or events you enjoy will help you feel more relaxed, setting the stage for both learning and positive interaction with others.

Let's say you have taken some of the above actions and after just a few weeks your schedule is filling up. You are learning and building a network of new contacts and something unexpected has happened. You are so busy that there is little time to think about the past or dwell on negative news. Taking action each week will propel you forward, setting the wheels in motion for a successful job search.

Job seekers who create plans incorporating varied activities tend to land jobs quicker than those who do not. An added bonus is a boost in self-confidence, which can improve future interviewing outcomes.

This is just the beginning. Please join me on this journey each month as we focus on actions aimed at achieving success in your job search. Up next: volunteering.

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