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JOB SEARCH BEST PRACTICES

I haven't met anyone yet who relishes having to look for a job. If you're ready to start, here are some best practices to incorporate into your job search process to ensure you look good at every stage of your search.

Set Aside Time – It's tough to look for a job while still employed. The alternative is worse, though, looking for a job while unemployed. Understandably you may feel pulled in multiple directions when looking for a job while still employed. Adding in the time to search for a job into an already busy schedule isn't appealing. But it's necessary. This may seem obvious, but few people really set aside the time to diligently search, follow up, network, etc. They treat their job search like an afterthought scanning job postings when they have a few spare minutes. **This is your future you're working on here.** Assess how much time you can carve out each day to pursue meaningful job search activities like the ones listed in this article. Once you figure it out, make it happen each day.

Network – 80% of jobs are filled by company insiders, people with knowledge of open positions and personal referrals. That means 20% of jobs are filled via online job postings. Obviously you'll want to spend more time identifying people who may be helpful and other connections who should know about your job search and goals to increase the odds of you finding a job quickly. Tell key people in your network you are looking and what your goal is. Are you looking to move laterally? Are you looking to move up? Are you looking to change industries? Transition to another role? Be clear. While networking take an interest in the person you're meeting and listen for ways you could help them. It doesn't necessarily have to be related to their job search, it could be with a recommendation to a great service provider, information on your favorite travel destination, etc. Remember – **"givers gain."**

Be Active on LinkedIn™ – LinkedIn™ is the most underutilized resource by the job seeker. It is a way to present yourself to potential employers and recruiters with a profile that reinforces and elaborates on the personal branding on your resume. Your LinkedIn™ profile is a great place to highlight the soft skills you may not be able to emphasize on your resume. There are millions and millions of people on LinkedIn™ who are looking for people with your unique skill sets and personal brand. Do your best to get in front of them with regular updates, demonstrating thought leadership, participating in discussions in groups, posing questions, etc. Use LinkedIn™ to find company insiders and get introductions; establish a connection and see if they'd be willing to chat with you or meet for coffee to talk about their workplace. But most importantly you want your profile to be well branded and to tell a story. An incomplete profile simply does not cut it anymore on LinkedIn™. You need to be putting your best out there in your resume and LinkedIn™ profile.

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Job Search Best Practices Continued

Tailor Your Resume – You may have a fantastic resume, but you must make sure that it is tailored to the particular position you’re applying for. Otherwise the Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) may not find your resume. You also want your reader to see that you possess the skills sets, etc. that they are looking for.

Tailor Your Cover Letter – Your cover letter is a place where you can really set the stage for why you are the best possible candidate for the position you’re applying for. Make sure your cover letter includes a reason why you are interested in the job, why you want to work for the company and the value you bring. Make yours stand out by tailoring it as much as possible to the company and to the position. Your reader will notice. If your resume doesn’t speak to the position, your reader will wonder why you applied.

Send Out Thank You Notes Immediately – In this day and age when hand writing anything is considered novel, it will set you apart. Why do that instead of sending an email? Isn’t sending an email faster? Yes, it is. I recommend that you do both. Ensure the recipient receives your thank you. Most candidates will fail to take the time to do this. Not sending a thank you shows a lack of gratitude for the time your interviewers spent with you. The thank you note is an opportunity to set yourself apart from everyone else by taking the time to reiterate why you are a good fit for the position and express gratitude.

Keep Looking While You’re Waiting – You may have had a great interview, but don’t start writing that resignation letter and cease all job hunting activities, yet. Doing so will negatively impact you psychologically when you don’t hear back in the timeframe you expected. Keep all your irons in the fire and stay active networking and using LinkedIn™. Your job search isn’t over until the fat lady sings. Isn’t that how the saying goes? Staying active in the search will help you from focusing on hearing back from the company you interviewed with and keep your momentum going in case the great interview doesn’t turn into a job offer.

Finally, while job searching isn’t always fun, it is necessary. It is your future and your livelihood that hangs in the balance. Being disciplined about your search and incorporating these best practices will pay big dividends.

The best is yet to come,

Michelle