

Seven Habits of Highly Successful Job Seekers

By Linda Matias

In the job search craze, there are those who land a job right away and those who struggle through the process of finding one for a long time. '[Luck](#)' is usually the response one hears from disenfranchised job seekers when they find out that their neighbor down the street was offered a position after only a two-week search. With many job seekers vying for only a few open positions, the truth is that 'luck' rarely has anything to do with it.

Realizing that their job search campaign doesn't have to be a never-ending struggle, successful job seekers approach the process with patience and persistence. If you want to be among the highly successful job seekers follow the seven steps outlined below.

1. Search with purpose

Instead of trying to fit into a mold set by a hiring organization, target companies that match your goals and career values; doing this will allow you to focus your energy into searching for a position that is a natural fit.

After all, you don't want to find yourself embarking on another search within a year's time because you made a decision in haste.

2. Always be prepared

Be ready for your day's activities by 9 am. Opportunities rarely land on your lap and you have to be prepared for the surprises that may come up during the day. You don't want to be caught sleeping when someone calls to discuss an employment opportunity.

If you find yourself answering the phone like this: "hello? . . . well . . . um . . . well, like I was kinda sleeping. . . how long is this gonna take? . . . who are you again? . . . like I, um, contacted so many places, cuz, you know, like, I can't like find a job . . ." then it is time to reprioritize your needs.

Waiting until your unemployment insurance is about to end before you begin aggressively looking for a position can be a costly mistake. You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you are running low on resources and desperation is about to set in. This is when mistakes are made and your job search may begin to suffer.

3. Develop a job search plan

Organize your job search, map out a strategy, set priorities, and establish goals. Begin your search with a clear focus and a plan. Participate in a number of activities including answering classified ads, posting your resume on the Internet, and going on informational interviews.

4. Bypass Human Resources

A human resources representative is also known as a "screener." The screener's job is to review resumes and match your experience with a checklist of requirements set forth by the hiring manager. If there are enough matches, the human resources representative forwards the resume to the decision maker.

Unfortunately, not much is left to the screener's interpretation. This is why most opportunities are lost - because the screener doesn't have the luxury of making a decision based on instinct; he or she is instructed to follow the lead of the hiring manager.

Since the decision makers (e.g., VP of Sales, Director of Marketing, or CEO) are the ones who determine who is ultimately hired, it is advisable that you apply directly to them.

5. Write follow-up letters

Well-written follow up letters can make a difference as to whether you get hired. A follow-up letter is more than a simple note thanking the interviewer for his or her time. It should be a sophisticated letter that either re-affirms your interest in the position, serves as an opportunity to mention an important point you neglected to bring up, and/or provides an opportunity to offer new insight on a topic that was discussed during the interview.

6. Avoid toxic job seekers

Job clubs are a great way to generate ideas and for networking purposes. However, some are also a breeding ground for negativity. These support groups can inadvertently affect your job search. Take inventory of the job seekers in attendance. Do they offer words of encouragement? Are they supportive of your efforts, or do they feed into your insecurities?

If after such meetings you feel emotionally drained and start to believe your chances of landing a job are bleak, then it's time to search for a new support team.

7. Be good to yourself

There are two types of job seekers. One, that has a laid back approach, and the other that always feels "there aren't enough hours in the day" and compulsively searches for a job without taking a breather.

Following in the footsteps of the latter is the fastest way to reaching burn out and when careless mistakes are often made. Though your job search should be your primary activity, don't allow it to consume your every waking moment.

Every so often take a mini vacation; spend time with people who support you, listen to music and participate in activities you enjoy. Clearing your mind replenishes your energy and will allow you to continue searching for a job with a fresh outlook.

Recognized as a career expert, Linda Matias brings a wealth of experience to the career services field. She has been sought out for her knowledge of the employment market, outplacement, job search strategies, interview preparation, and resume writing, quoted a number of times in The Wall Street Journal, New York Newsday, Newsweek, and HR-esource.com. She is President of CareerStrides and the National Resume Writers' Association. Visit her website at www.careerstrides.com or email her at linda@careerstrides.com.

Seven Habits of Highly Successful Job Seekers by Linda Matias, JCTC, CEIP (c) Linda Matias - All rights reserved