

Critical Job Seeking Mistakes: tips that will differentiate you from your competition!

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Critical Job Seeker Errors that are causing them to be passed up on opportunities

I have been headhunting for over 16 years and this is my 3rd recession in the employment industry. There have been a few things that have concerned me most; the volume of layoffs, duration of the layoffs and how unprepared most of the job seekers are. Everyday I talk to dozens of Technical Job seekers, and one truth has become evident. Most seekers have no job hunting plan, don't know how to create a sustainable job hunting plan, and thus are suffering because of it.

It is my goal with this article to help anyone who needs to find a job, or is concerned about losing their job, to proactively build a Career Plan that is sustainable for their future. This plan is no different than the preparation's you take for investing in your retirement. It takes thought, planning, networking and understanding your positioning in the employment market. The current employment rate is 8.1% across the US; add the disenfranchisement or population who has given up looking for work, and we are probably closer to 20% unemployment. This mass flood of talent to the market place is causing frustration and competition we have not seen since the Great Depression. In order to separate yourself from the rest of the job seekers, here are some tips to ensure you differentiate yourself from the employment pack.

The Resume:

Tips: Everyone has resume tips; I am not going to comment on presentation and style is your choice. However, I will give some tips on structure of your resume to avoid unnecessary pitfalls.

- Remember not to put your contact information in Headers or Footers. I can not tell you the hundreds of resumes I have received throughout the past five years that have made this simple mistake.

KEY: Most applicant tracking systems that import your resume have challenges stripping the data out the headers/footers. The result is a resume with no contact information.

- Technology: Most recruitment technology and methodology is based off of key words and formulas. When a recruiter searches to find the top 30% or 100 resumes to recruit they use a ranking system of how many key words are found in the resume. Same holds true for the job boards, social networks and search engines.

KEY: Make sure you add a technology section at the bottom of your resume that has all of the technology you are functional in. Even Word, Excel, etc... Do not assume that everyone knows that software.

- Accomplishments: When I look at peoples resumes I see bullet points, or simple sentences like: "I saved the company \$500 or increased sales by 38%". An applicant may think that this is a great accomplishment, and it could be. But, from an outsider's perspective, we do not have the reference to know if that \$500 is a minor or major impact to that company's bottom line. Lots of questions and assumptions are left up to whoever is reading your resume, and more importantly the whole story was not told.

KEY: Here is a simple formula for you to figure out what your accomplishments are.

Business Challenge + Your Solution = Accomplishments (never change)

The key to this formula is that accomplishments (results) never change! What changes are the business challenges you faced, what your recommended solutions were to that challenge, and the result of that solution. (Warning: An accomplishment should be no longer than 3-4 sentences. You are not writing a dissertation!!)

Formulating your accomplishment like this will allow the employer to get an emotional connection to you and your resume. Most Companies share the same issues and business challenges, and solutions. At the same time your accomplishment will demonstrate your business understanding, and critical thinking skills.

EXAMPLE:

ABC's recruitment process was incomplete. I proactively designed a phone screen, and in person interview process which led to a reduction of turnover by 50%. As a result of our new hires, we help our internal customer increase productivity and overall profitability by 5%.

Interviewing Mistakes

- **Your Interview Pitch:** Know your story, know your career progression, and know why. Know why you left your jobs, any gaps, or red flags in your resume. **KEY:** Know your pitch and practice it. You need to be able to quickly answer the questions asked about your history quickly and concisely. Ask questions about the opportunity. This is the only way you are going to create a dialog and learn more about this potential opportunity. Do not be the person six months down the road saying you did not know the job was going to be like this, or you never told me that. You did not ask, and therefore did not learn enough about the opportunity before you accepted it.

- **Salary Confidentiality:** Not sharing salary or compensation with the recruiter limits your candidacy. Why? First, the company is not sure if they can afford you and will spend more time with candidates that fall into their rate range. Secondly, it could be construed as difficult to work with, or that you have something to hide. When ultimately you are trying not to price yourself out of this opportunity, or leave money on the table. **KEY:** How not sell yourself short when it comes to compensation. "There are two reasons why I am here today. First, money is important. The second and more important reason is opportunity. I see a lot of opportunity here at ABC Company, and I do not want to price myself out of it. Is that fair? My compensation is, or was X\$\$ with a bonus program of XX\$"

What you did was tell the hiring manager that you are willing to take a short term loss for a long term gain. If you make it to the offer stage they know to make you the best offer they can. Then the ball is in your court!

Networking:

Controlling your future begins and ends with strategy of developing and building personal and professional networks. Many people give me the excuses, "I do not have time" or "I have too many family commitments". My response: "You have to make time!" This is a commitment for your future, both personally and professionally. Unfortunately people are learning this lesson the hard way in today's employment crisis. Now I am seeing people rush to catch up out of desperation, or survival instinct through online resources. **PAUSE-REEVALUATE YOUR PROCESS!!!! KEY:** Take an inventory of where you are at. Look at who you know, what social networking groups you belong to, or should, and what religious or charitable groups you are associated with.

Finally, you need to define the protocols of, who, what, when, where, why and how for each of these groups. Some contacts you can call directly and explain how they can help. Some contacts are needed simply to lend their name, and introduce you to their contacts.

Think of it this way. The contacts closest to you are the most influential to directly helping your career path, and should be your top priority. Establishing a pattern of communication with them is critical. The farther out you go from your network the less you will want to contact. Remember the further from your primary contact list you go the more critical it is that you evaluate each contact, and try to set up some communication with them. You never know how they could help, or who could be the next primary network contact. **KEY:** Network Health-now you are starting to feel good about creating a communication plan that will allow you to use your top critical contacts to get the word out for you. Now what you need to do is check the health of your network. It is important to reach out to your network to see how everyone is doing.

With gratitude I am happy to share these nuggets of knowledge that has translated to real life results. I have seen each of these tactics be implemented first hand by job seekers right now. All though I can not guarantee you a job what I can guarantee is immediate results from these proven tips and techniques.

Remember to know your pitch, prepare for your interview and constantly network you will not fail.

Category Human Resources, Technology, Business
Tags headhunting, recession, employment, layoffs, job seekers, technical job seekers, resume, Interviews,
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