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When Fear Takes Over Our Thinking

By Dale Jodoin  
Columnist

People keep asking me the same question lately. What is going on with people? They do not ask for it. They ask if they are tired. They ask it confused. They ask it the way someone asks when they no longer recognize the room they are standing in. I heard it at the coffee shop. I hear it while waiting in line. I hear it from people who voted left, right, and some who stopped voting at all. Different people, same feeling. Something feels off. I think part of the answer is fear. Not fear of war or hunger, but fear of a person. Fear of a name. Fear of what that name has come to represent. Say the name Donald Trump and watch what happens. Some people tense up. Some laugh in that nervous way people laugh when they are uncomfortable. Some get angry before the sentence even finishes. That reaction is not thinking. It is emotion grabbing the steering wheel. People joke about Trump Derangement Syndrome. It is not a real illness. No doctor can diagnose it. But as a way to describe behavior, it fits better than many want to admit. This is not about disagreeing with Trump. That is normal. That is politics. This is about fear so strong it shuts down logic. I want to be clear. I am not punching down. I am not calling people stupid. I am talking to people who are scared, even if they would never use that word themselves. Fear makes good people act in strange ways. When people are afraid, they stop listening. They stop weighing facts. They sort the world into teams. Good side and bad side. Approved opinions and forbidden ones. That is where we are stuck. A good example came out of Venezuela. People were freed from a brutal system. Real people. Real families. People who lived with fear, prison, and violence. When they were released, they celebrated. You could see it on their faces. Relief. Joy. Hope. You would think that would be one of those moments where everyone pauses and says, at least something good happened. But many people did not. Instead, they got angry. Not at the dictatorship. Not suffering. But at the fact that Trump had anything to do with it. That should stop us in our tracks. If people who were tortured are smiling, and people watching from safe homes are angry, something has gone wrong. That is not a value. That is pride mixed with fear. Some people have built their whole identity around hating Trump. If he does something good, even once, it feels like admitting it would crack their worldview. So they refuse. They say it does not count. Or it was fake. Or it was evil somehow. Anything except saying, yes, that helped people. Fear does that. It makes good news feel dangerous. We see the same thing here in Canada. If you question taxes, spending, or the direction of the country, some people do not argue back. They label you. They call you Maple MAGA or Mega Maple. Same idea, different flavour. It is meant to shut you up. I have met people called Maple MAGA who have never worn a red hat, never attended a rally, and never cared much about American politics at all. They just voted Conservative. Or questioned government spending. Or asked why groceries cost so much. That is it. But now, disagreeing with Liberals or the NDP gets you lumped into a cartoon version of something you are not. It becomes a shortcut. No discussion needed. Calling someone Maple MAGA is treated like calling them racist or dangerous. It sounds serious. It sounds moral. But most of the time, it is just a way to avoid answering hard questions. That is not a debate. That is fear wearing a mask. The strange part is watching people defend governments that are clearly hurting working Canadians, just because those governments are not Conservative. High taxes get explained away. Missed promises get ignored. Waste gets shrugged off. Fear makes people excuse things they would never excuse otherwise. In the United States, people were told that obvious problems did not matter as long as Trump was gone. Questioning that made you the problem. Not the policy. Not the results. You. That is not healthy for any country. Here is the part that matters. You can dislike Trump and still admit when something works. You can support him and still criticize him. Most normal people live in that middle space. Quietly. Without shouting. Trump helped move peace talks that others could not. That does not make him perfect. It makes those moments real. Pretending they never happened does not make you moral. It just makes you dishonest. Fear has turned politics into a team sport where cheering matters more than outcomes. Where being right matters more than people being free. I am not saying people who think this way are evil. I am saying they are overwhelmed. Afraid of being wrong. Afraid of losing control. Afraid of what happens if the story they were told does not hold up. That fear is powerful. But it does not have to run things. We can still talk. We can still disagree without hating. We can still say, I do not like him, but that helped. Or I voted Conservative, but they got this wrong. That is what grown ups do. Calling names will not save Canada. Screaming will not fix the United States. Fear will not build better leaders. Thinking will. If hearing Trump's name makes your heart race or your jaw tighten, it might be worth asking why. Not to change your politics, but to get your balance back. Politics should not steal your peace. This is not about worshipping anyone. It is about staying grounded. About not letting fear turn you into someone who roots against freedom just to stay consistent. People are not crazy. They are overloaded. And overloaded people sometimes forget how to breathe.

That is what is going wrong today.

And the good news is, we can slow it down if we choose to.



How You Prepare Now Will Define Your 2026 Job Search

By Nick Kossovan

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" - Benjamin Franklin

Once again, we've stepped into a New Year, provoking reflection and contemplation, which is a good thing. People rarely take the time to assess where they are in their various life journeys and ask whether, regarding their health, relationships, finances, career progression, or, if they're job searching, their job search, they need to make adjustments. (I don't believe we're on one singular "life journey." Rather, our lives consist of divergent paths that often feel like forced adhesion.)

Most job seekers still approach their job search as if it's 2005, applying to jobs online—the equivalent of playing the lottery—naïvely expecting their resume will get them an interview. They overlook the fact that they're competing against younger, more skilled, more qualified, and hungrier candidates.

By all indications, the 2026 job market will be cutthroat and unforgiving. A Wall Street Journal "heads up" article, Companies Are Outlining Plans for 2026. Hiring isn't one of them, by Chip Cutter, doesn't hold back that job seekers will face a job market characterized by fierce competition, and for those employed, especially those whose jobs don't directly influence their employers' profitability, job security will feel like a fragile illusion.

Whether currently unemployed or employed, in which case, as I pointed out, they can be summoned to an HR meeting at any time, those unprepared for job searching in an unforgiving job market will quickly realize that only those who not only have the skills and experience but also know how to position themselves as someone who'd be a value add to an employer's profitability, are getting hired. Therefore, before jumping into the 2026 job market, take some time to prepare for what you'll be up against.

Clean up your digital footprint.

The 2025 job market marked a clear shift from the aggressive hiring of previous years to a more deliberate, selective approach. A critical part of an employer's "selective approach" is reviewing a candidate's digital footprint. Fair or not, recruiters and employers will Google you to determine whether you're interview-worthy. If you're applying for jobs you're qualified for but aren't getting interviews, your digital footprint may be the reason. Although there may be other reasons you're not getting interviews, a controversial online presence is a common one. Spend a few minutes scrolling through LinkedIn, and you'll see that many job seekers post content driven by ego without considering its negative impact on their job search.

Delete any posts, especially those criticizing an employer's hiring practices, as well as comments and pictures that could put employers off. If you've been heavily active on social media, posting about your job search frustrations, using a service like Erase.com or MineOS to clean up your digital footprint can be a good investment. Moving forward, commit to posting comments that showcase the value you'd add to an employer's profitability, rather than publicly demonstrating your inability to control your emotions.

Let go of any sense of entitlement you have.

A sense of entitlement is a job seeker's biggest enemy. It's why many job seekers are constantly frustrated and angry. The belief that employers owe you a job, a certain lifestyle, or even a living is unrealistic. Letting go of entitlement will significantly improve your job search prospects. An entitled attitude is a major red flag for employers, suggesting a lack of humility, limited teamwork potential, and unreasonable expectations about compensation and responsibilities. Adopt a mindset that focuses on what you can contribute to employers, not on what you expect them to give you. Start speaking in numbers. The majority of job seekers offer only opinions about themselves, rather than numbers that quantify the impact they had on their employer's business; hence, they don't get interviews—employers don't hire opinions; they hire results. Update your resume and LinkedIn profile to include numbers that quantify your contributions to your employer's business. Did you generate revenue, create savings, introduce efficiencies, increase production, reduce waste, etc.? Today, employers hire only candidates they believe will positively impact their profitability. Therefore, make sure your resume and LinkedIn profile clearly illustrate, using quantifying numbers as the most efficient way, how you enhanced your employer's profitability. Refresh your LinkedIn profile with a new headshot and banner. If you don't have either, add them. Job searching in 2025 is all about being visible and, more importantly, trustworthy. I still see LinkedIn profiles without a headshot. Why? A LinkedIn profile without a headshot is suspect; it suggests you're not a real person, that you're a fake profile. No headshot = "What's this person trying to hide?" Noteworthy: LinkedIn profiles with a headshot receive 14x more views than those without one. Besides a profile headshot, a LinkedIn banner is crucial when job searching, as it serves as your professional storefront, significantly boosting visibility, signalling your intent to recruiters and employers, building trust, and providing instant branding that helps you stand out. Head over to Canva and browse their free-to-personalize LinkedIn banner templates. Begin your 2026 job search with intention, not by continuing what hasn't been working for you.