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PRO TIPS for staying confident in the face of rejection:

Not to complain, but I've been unemployed the last nine months and, naturally, faced a lot of rejection during my job search. Even so, most days I still believe in myself and the value of my skills. What's my secret? I've got a few counterintuitive tricks up my sleeve:

1 - Give yourself tangible, visible reminders of your accomplishments

You are not the failure you sometimes imagine, but it's easy to forget that, especially when facing rejection. Any time you're working, keep tangible reminders of your accomplishments near you and in plain sight. And I mean that literally: paint it on your workspace wall if you have to. Make it big and conspicuous so you'll notice it when you're feeling like you're not enough. For example, whenever I land a consulting gig, I ALWAYS buy or make a piece of merch with the client's logo and plant it on my desk.

Another way to do this, especially if you're unemployed, is to revise your resume frequently and keep it close by. Do this weekly, or better yet, DAILY. Hell, lately I rewrite mine sometimes half a dozen times a day. This may seem inefficient, but I promise it's not. It forces you to remind yourself of the great things you've done in your career. Plus, a tailored resume will land you more interviews anyway.

2 - Get friendly with your former colleagues

Regardless of your employment status, you should always be networking. Every person you meet and every conversation you have makes you better. Especially when unemployed, you may feel compelled to focus all your networking time on promoting yourself to prospective employers and other influential contacts. Of course you should do that a lot, but you should also reserve some time to keep in touch with those who have stood by you in the trenches. Reminiscing war stories will remind you of times you believed in yourself more fully. Plus, just like networking with others, old colleagues may be helpful in getting you interviews or even hire you themselves. You never know.

3 - Give away some of your very best work for FREE

We all remember the Joker's famous line from The Dark Knight, "If you're good at something, never do it for free," but he was dead wrong. I'm not kidding. Especially if you're unemployed, make amazing things and give them away to everyone who'll take them. I know it seems counterintuitive, but it will greatly improve your self-confidence. Making cool things feels great and reminds you why and how much you like (or at least don't hate) what you do and that you're actually good at it, despite any rejection you're facing. Helping people feels great too and reminds you that you and your work are valuable, even when you're not getting paid. Also, people tend to accept free work pretty readily, and having your work accepted may not be as good as earning money for it, but it sure feels a lot better than constant rejection.

The confidence boost you'll get from giving away your best work is its own reward, but there's more! It will also help keep your skills sharp through an otherwise dry spell. The last thing you want to be, especially when unemployed, is rusty. Even the best of us can go unnoticed in a thick stack of resumes, but free work will often turn heads. I've even got proof - work I've done and given away for free has been featured on NPR's Marketplace, ABC Radio, The Chicago Tribune, and too many podcasts, conference presentations, and panel discussions to mention.

In the words of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Give it away, give it away, give it away, now."

We all face rejection sometimes, and when you do, I hope these tips will help you maintain confidence as much as they've helped me.

Cheers,

Michael Uhrich

Founder & Chief Economist

[Seventh Point Analytic Consulting](#)

PS - This post is free too. Want to hire me? 😊