

Ask the Career Coach: Effective Job Search Strategies

Keep to a schedule and network in real life, advises the coach

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I am in transition and find I am so busy attending meeting after meeting that I only go online after dinner. How do I figure out what is most effective for my job search and how long should this search last?

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When you are in transition, the first thing to do is create a weekly schedule for yourself. The hardest part of transitioning is typically the lack of routine that follows the job loss. Your schedule needs to be based on your goals.

As you think about your goals, determine what your short term and what your long term goals are. Check to see if your goals are realistic based on your current skills or do you need to refresh your knowledge or learn new skills? Your short term goal may include finding a similar position as your last one and your long term goal may involve retraining for a new industry or new career.

If your goal is to find a similar position in the same industry, then you are conducting a targeted job search. A targeted job search is focused and may require some research and much networking. Using your local library, you can use on line databases. One is ReferenceUSA (<http://www.referenceusa.com>) to search the industry and identify all of the possible companies within a certain geographical territory. There are many additional resources that your Research Librarian should be able to help you with.

Once you identify the targeted companies, you will need to see who is in your network that can help you tap into them. Your network consists of your family, friends, former co-workers, vendors you have worked with in the past, your church, temple and other associations and affiliations, plus on line communities you are involved with - LinkedIn, Plaxo, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

To be an effective networker, it is helpful to create openings through the online communities but the true value comes with the follow up conversation over the phone or face to face networking! When you meet someone, your persona and competence coupled with your communication style is what builds the relationship. Relationships take time to develop so see this networking activity as a long term strategy!

If your goal is twofold, find a similar role so you can pay your bills while transitioning to a new career, then you may want to conduct the targeted job search while researching other career options. One site, O'NET is created for the U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (<http://online.onetcenter.org>). This site allows you to explore various skills sets and determine job possibilities. It also can provide you with the market range for salaries based on jobs identified within the database.

What is most effective for your job search will depend on your goals. Speaking with family or friends may help you set the goals. If not, a trained professional can help you set your goals. The weekly schedule will evolve over time. Initially, it may allocate a heavier allotment of time devoted to research. This will gradually shift to networking meetings within selected associations to help you build your networks within your current or new functional area or industry. You may choose to identify retraining

options, researching scholarships or grants that may be available. This too can be research at your library. Personally, I am a huge fan of libraries and they are free!

During your job search, make sure you are out connecting with the world around you on a daily basis. It may mean a walk around the block or to the library or a networking meeting or a lecture on a topic that interest you. It is too easy to remain behind your computer for hours.

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

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