

Career Self-Management - - - Quick Guide

The Seven Foundations of Effective Career Management during the Job Search

1. STATUS CHECK (START AT THE BEGINNING)

Fundamental to career development is the question --- **What is my current situation?** It is at this initial phase where an individual can identify significant issues from a historical context.

If unemployed, the problem may appear to be --
- How do I get another job? However, if recent employment was not satisfying for whatever reason, then a prior question can be presented -
-- What job will satisfy me?

If you are at the start of your career or work life the question may be --- What are the growth businesses and careers that will support my short & long-term employment wants/ needs?

Defining "home base" becomes an exercise that can be introduced at any time. There is no need to wait for an impending crisis to contend with issues. In fact, individuals who have lost their employment often find it difficult to maintain objectivity in their answers and resort to the belief that it is more important to get back to work than to determine their current career position as it relates to career goals.

It may be important for an individual to return to work for practical reasons, but it is also important to know the starting point prior to establishing search goals. After all, how can you measure the distance to a target if you don't know where you are starting from?

2. UPDATE AND REFRAME (TO INCREASE AWARENESS)

For all the time spent at work, many people tend to forget or ignore accomplishments about as fast as they are achieved. Conscious awareness of what is done and learned at work is habitually minimized because urgent tasks take precedence or verbalizing successes might be viewed as boasting.

It is beneficial to examine and record contributions made on the job. This analysis forms part of a person's uniqueness and applies to most workers at most levels, and not just the privileged few. Getting into the habit of seeing work from a broader perspective (what it means to your professional development) is easy to learn but hard to remember to do.

Update your list of accomplishments. Get acquainted with your past (again / for the first time). Past experiences take on new meaning when reviewed through recent learning. Settle on a clear job objective

Reframing is popularly known in career counselling as the process of translating the past to clarify the transferability of skill sets to new types of work. Reframing in career management is somewhat analogous to taking a special painting or photograph to a picture framer who recommends mats and frames for impact --- the viewer's impression becomes influenced by adjusted elements.

Some strengths may be so well and thoroughly developed they are no longer a prominent feature of the 'career picture' --- their importance becomes diminished in favour of other skills and abilities that are current and more evident.

This deliberate process of choosing which historical circumstances to minimize and which strengths to emphasize is at the core of proactive career management. Highlight career control and self-determination while underplaying the current value of less significant or assumed strengths.

3. PACKAGE THE PRODUCT (FORMULATE A PERSONAL PRESENTATION)

A prospective employee's value in the employment market is proportional to experience, developed competencies and reputation. This performance is expressed in a traditional format --- the resume, cover letter and references. The resume is always accompanied by a cover letter to raise reader interest in the resume. Combine these documents with a list of professional references, proof of performance during interviews (power stories) and rigorous mental preparation to formulate a powerful personal presentation.

Each element in the Personal Presentation is deserving of extensive elaboration and it takes time to master each part. Put simply, the

resume is no more that a de facto record of past places of employment, duties performed and accomplishments. it is a sophisticated marketing message that is crafted to provide the greatest amount of relevant information for the limited time accorded their reading. The cover letter plays an integral role that tries to make the recipient more interested in the resume by linking the candidate to the reader's unmet needs.

Finally, interviews entail articulating and appropriately expanding on the content of this written work. All components are mutually inter-dependent and result from thorough completion of the tasks in the Updating / Reframing stage.



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4. MARKET KNOWLEDGE (INCREASE CREDIBILITY)

There are two highly effective ways to become a better informed work searcher. First, secondary research is the name given to going over the existing, usually written documentation that is available on virtually any subject.

The Internet is a major source of all the data and information that anyone could ever want on any given subject. As well, reference sections at libraries are often managed by helpful personnel that are specially trained in the science of finding information on specific subjects. Business related information is compiled by myriad industry sources in each country and available in highly organized forms such as directories and on-line databases.

There has never been a time when more information has been available to the public for no more expense than the effort to gather it. If there is any problem today it would be the fact that there is too much data available on most topics.

The second most important information for the work searcher is through networking activity. Networking does not mean that you are limited by existing contacts in a given industry or company. It implies rather that each of us is part of a circle of acquaintances made up of individuals who are willing to talk to us about subjects of importance.

Through however modest a base of connections, the job seeker shares their information needs and inquires about the acquaintance's knowledge of people who may be able to assist. In practice, network activity relies upon the principle now called the Six Degrees of Separation that illustrates the interconnectivity of the planet's population. It mostly depends on one's ability to express needs and commit to a high degree of persistence.

5. PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING (STRATEGIZE)

It is a basic truth that there are two requisites to success --- you need to know where you are (current reality) and your need to know where you are heading (desired end result-goal).

The rest, the in-between part, is all action based on perseverance and careful attention to feedback. The relationship of these three parts is a Plan --- a strategy to get from A to B.

Developing a plan is can be a straightforward exercise of identifying practical courses of action, classifying risk, and converting the plan to action. Essentially it means that once an appreciation of how to use talents and identify the factors that could negatively affect career advancement is gained, organize overall directional decisions on paper. Then set out on the quest. The plan is subject to continuous revision as conditions change. With uncertainty, launching and managing a plan is an on-going process.

6. EXECUTE THE PLAN (START MARKETING YOU)

With all preceding steps completed prior to developing a plan, all that needs to be done is execute the Plan. This is the stage where you take assertive measures to connect with target organizations, track responses (and non-responses) and persistently follow-up.

Limitations of your current interest are imposed at this point because it can be tempting to divert limited resources (focus and energy) to unplanned events that reveal themselves during the course of a search.

Focusing efforts is central to the plan. While criteria change from time to time, to be most valuable, the Plan must reflect current career-related realities, wants and needs.

In today's buyer's market, "fit", industry experience, education, leadership ability, and functional skills are demanded by increasingly more selective employers. Therefore, during the marketing phase, it is necessary for job seekers to attempt to match career expectations with market realities.

7. RE-ENGAGEMENT

It is a maxim of the job search process that focussed efforts are eventually rewarded. Although the searcher has little direct control over the timing, it is a given that offers of employment will follow well-managed searches. The offers may or may not come from anticipated sources and initially, some may not even appear to have merit. Indeed, an offer of employment has one thing in common with a rejection --- they are both just feedback responses to an action (Admittedly, the former is more desirable). When most criteria are met in a written offer of employment, great!

Yet the strategic job seeker knows that every opportunity needs to be examined on its own merit. Declining an offer because it fails to

meet the significant personal or professional re-engagement conditions is more straightforward when the standards and preconditions are set.

It is common for employment offers to be subject to at least some modest level of discussion and thereby negotiable --- if only on the most simple level. Offers that are not discussible (absolutely not negotiable) are probably cause for circumspection so that you know what you are agreeing to. Employers tend to respect candidates who can politely articulate and discuss requests. It reflects the kind of conscious competence that is not apparent in all candidates.

JOB SEARCH SEMINAR TOPICS (OVERVIEW OF 2, 3 OR 4-DAY SEMINAR TOPICS)

- Introduction / Overview
- Change As Opportunity
- Job Successes
- Self-Discovery
- Developing A Resume
- Getting Organized
- Information Interviews
- Electronic Assistance
- Developing A Contact Network
- Targeting Potential Employers
- Communicating
- Job Interviews
- Negotiating The Job
- Managing Your Career
- Completed Resume and Cover Letter
- Wrap-Up

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