

The TRUTH About Job Hunting in Today's Job Market

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I address many job search groups and work with clients who ask me whether it is still possible to find a job in today's job market.

The answer is "yes". As a matter of fact, I have a client who is beginning a new job this Monday. Companies are hiring. It is your job to be at the right place, at the right time, with the ability to convince an employer that you are the right person for the job.

Slowed job growth does not mean that people will be staying in their jobs forever and a job freeze often means that a company will not be adding to their head count, but if they have a job vacancy they may need to fill it.

Keep in mind that people still retire, have babies, relocate, and get ill. There are many reasons why people leave their jobs so don't give up and take the "poor me" attitude. You will never get a new job if you are not actively looking for one. Your job search is a job and should be treated as one with set hours devoted to your search. As they say in the lottery commercials, **"You have to be in it to win it."**

Just because the job market is tighter doesn't mean that the job search rules have gone out the window. **You just need to ramp up your efforts.** It is true that there are more candidates for each job vacancy so most people won't get noticed if they just send off resume after resume without making themselves memorable in some way.

Stay ahead of the competition by actively building relationships person by person. Utilize networking sites, search engines and mutual contacts. The most successful job seekers have a clearly defined job target and have created a solid list of potential employers. They work hard to meet people within their target job market and drop names when appropriate. Most jobs are not advertised because employers don't want to be inundated with resumes. It is up to you to keep your finger on the pulse and be one of the first to know about a job opportunity.

Because companies are working with lean budgets they can't afford to make a mistake when they hire a replacement. They can't waste their time and money to train someone who will not work out in the long run. They are replacing positions that are vital to their organization and you **need to make it clear to them that you are the best candidate.**

Resumes are still the ticket to getting the coveted interview. Even if you come highly recommended by someone in your network, your resume is the first thing that will tell a potential employer all about you. Typos are not OK! Grammatical mistakes may cause your resume to end up in the "round file." Resumes should be easy to read, they should highlight what you will bring to a potential employer and they should make it easy for the reader to know how you will be able

to meet their needs. Always use key words that they use in their job descriptions/postings. Include objective statistics such as your budget, number of direct reports, successes and projects that relate to their needs.

Because your resume and your cover letter are usually your first introduction to a prospective employer, you must make an extra effort to design it so that it reflects the quality of work you will bring to a company. If it is sloppy, too wordy, contains errors, etc., it sends a message about you and that message is probably not what an organization is looking for at this time. **Think about the message you want to send** about yourself and make sure your resume reflects that message.

If you get an interview do **extra research on the company**, Google the person you will be interviewing with and check out their profile on Linked in and other networking sites. Gain a clear understanding of their needs and interests so that will be able to address meaningful ways in which you can help them solve some of their current challenges. **Figure out what keeps them up and night** and be prepared to share ideas, strategies and suggestions regarding how you can help them overcome their challenges. Consider how you can hit the ground running and make a difference in their organization within the first 30 days.

Because **companies can't afford to make a hiring mistake**, remember that EVERYTHING in your interview matters. Take extra care to dress appropriately, speak professionally and exude confidence. Employers can be picky in this job market so don't give them any reason to discard you as a candidate. Practice your answers to the interview questions that tend to make you tongue tied. **Be prepared** to maximize your answer to the question "Tell me about yourself?" Come prepared with stories that will bring your job skills and experience to life.

Interviews are also a learning opportunity for you. Yes, you need to sell yourself to your interviewer, but you also need to learn about the organizational culture, reporting structure and expected responsibilities. You want to convince your interviewer that you are looking for longevity and it is easier to do that if you have learned as much as possible during the interview process. Just the act of demonstrating your desire to have a deep understanding of the organization sends a positive message.

Always have a work file/brag book which contains references, projects and reports that demonstrate your strengths, skills and ability to hit the ground running if you get the job you are seeking. Documents often speak louder than words and may enable you to clinch a job offer.

Make your thank you notes meaningful. Think about what you learned and discussed during the interview and include any new ideas that came to mind after the interview. Reiterate your interest and what you will bring to the job. Send an article of interest if appropriate to show that you take initiative and go the extra mile.

If you are finding that your job search is taking longer than you ever expected don't despair and **don't allow yourself to get lazy.** Continue to get out of the house, walk around the neighborhood, volunteer to do the grocery shopping, attend networking meetings and browse job boards. **Continue to look for jobs wherever you can.** Never ever stop networking!

Remember that your network consists of social and professional relationships. Everyone is fair game during your job hunt. Volunteer for projects so that you can showcase your skills and abilities. People notice. They will keep you in mind if they have a job opening or hear of an opportunity that might work for you.

The truth is you need to be out there looking at all times.

- You need to **be creative**, open to all job leads, seek out opportunities, have a defined target and stay focused in your job search.
- You need to **be targeted** in your job search.
- You need to **be clear** about what you want and what you can offer an employer.
- You need to get out there and **build solid give and take relationships**. Add value, offer intelligence regarding the competition, provide know knowledge and make introductions.
- You need to **be "on" at all times**. The person next to you during exercise class just may be the person who helps you get that next job. Take pride in your appearance. Take pride in yourself.

The truth is that if you continue your focused job search your efforts will pay off!

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