

Prepare for your Job Search

Prepare for your Job Search

Mindset of Career Choices / Job Search Process

Believe it or not: The mindset with which you start thinking about your career and job search and that you are having during the entire process is one of most important factors influencing both the process as well as the outcome. How you think and feel about your career/job search has a direct influence on how you behave. This in turn will directly influence the outcome of your search. Your attitude and feelings show not only during a phone call or while interviewing in person, but convey also in a letter.

Playful mindset

Though possibly understandable, getting tense during the job search is the worst thing you can do to yourself. Depending on your personality, this may show as desperation, arrogance, impatience or inferiority. These are the worst messages to communicate to prospective employers. It is much more preferable to enjoy what you do. Only when you are relaxed are you able to present the best of your true self. So turn your job search into a joyful journey to your goal. As with so many things in life, you can decide how you are going to feel about things.

If you cannot immediately take on this attitude, change your behavior. Behavior often precedes and leads to changes in attitude and feeling.

Authenticity

Do not try to be someone or something else just to land a job. Only when are being authentic will you be able to truly relate to people and to be convincing. So be who you are.

Keep looking and create options

Never stop looking for a job until you have signed a contract. You never want to become too dependent on one specific job. Instead, you want to create choices for yourself.

Focus on the very moment

Always ask yourself: What do I need to do now? How do I do the best I can do now?

How to stay upbeat

1. Be passionate about your career choice and about pursuing this choice. Passion is the key to success, however you define success. If you are not passionate about yourself and about constructing your life, who will be? Passion also helps you taking on the playful mindset.
2. Work is work. And so is job search (even if it is playful). Think of what you may achieve by finding a job that not only feeds you but also satisfies you.
3. Handle each moment with grace, even if this moment is not the most desirable one. It is the only moment you have right now.

Making Career Choices

Self Assessment

Each career/job search clearly starts with identifying what you want and what you have to offer. It is most essential to know what you really want and need in your career. Only then can you commit to your job search and dedicate quality time and energy. Knowing what you are looking for also helps you setting clear limits and boundaries regarding the requirements a potential employer may ask you to comply with. It will also equip you for the interview.

It is necessary to assess your values, your skills and abilities as well as

your passions.

The following questions will help you understand better what kind of job you desire.

Your values

Mission: What do you most like to accomplish through your work?

What criteria are important to you? Rank order the following list of criteria regarding their importance they bear for you:

- Type of industry
- Type of organization
- Size of organization
- Reputation of organization
- Work content
- Salary
- Job title
- Location
- Opportunity to advance
- Regular further training
- Creativity
- Being part of a team
- Working on my own
- Benefits
- Workplace security
- Other

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What kind of industry would you like to work for? What makes this industry attractive for you?
- What type of organization would you like to work for? What makes this type of organization attractive for you?

Your Skills and Abilities

With what would you like to spend the biggest share of your time during a workday?

- Working with people
- Working with computers and numbers
- Working with hands and things
- Working with paper

Once you have chosen how you would like to spend the biggest timeshare, you may want to think more about exactly how you want to spend it. For example, if you generally want to work with people, do you prefer working one-on-one or in a group; do you want to convince people or to supervise people or to speak to them; with what type of people do you want to work, etc.? Similarly, if you want to work with paper, do you want to do administrative work, or reading/writing/editing?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What skill and expertise is absolutely essential for you to use in your career? What could you never dismiss without being absolutely unhappy?
2. What skills/expertise do you possess that others do not have?
3. What do you find easy that others find hard? What do you do naturally while others need a lot of effort to do it? This expertise is your unique selling point. It is this that distinguishes you from your competition. You have to market this skill adequately.

Your Passions

To identify your passions is very important. Only if you can be passionate about something will you have the energy to learn new and essential things. Only then will you put in the necessary amount of energy and stick with your choice. It is a delicate art to identify those passions. Most

of the times, we can find them by examining our private life. However, it is desirable to transfer them into your professional life, i.e. to identify careers in which you will find and can realize those passions.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. If you were to write a book, or to do a movie, what would they be about? What would be the topic? How would you craft the story?
2. Describe your dream workday from the moment you get up until you go to sleep. There are NO restrictions, feel absolutely free to list anything that comes to your mind. Consider the environment, your colleagues, who/what do you work with, what do you do, etc.
3. If there were no restrictions and no conditions: What career would you choose? What makes this career attractive for you?
4. What would you like your life to look like in 5 years from now? Which implications does that have for your career choice?

Interpreting your results:

Review your answers. Identify several careers that incorporate as many criteria as possible from all of the areas (values, skills, passions). Get information about those careers and then make your choice.

Getting Information about Career Options

You have several career options that you seriously consider for yourself. Now you should collect more detailed information about this career.

You may:

1. Read printed Information
2. Get Information from the Internet
3. Contact People in the Industry – Networking
4. Visit a Workplace of that Career; Job Shadowing

1. Reading printed information

Find a library with a 'career' or 'business' section. Talk to the person who manages that section and describe to him/her in greater detail what

exactly it is that you are looking for. People in charge of these sections are the most valuable source of information you can possibly imagine. Also, most libraries provide CD-ROMs and online services.

Reading resources:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ocohome.htm). It contains profiles of hundreds of the most popular careers, based on interviews with people in the respective fields.
- The Princeton Review Guide to Your Career.
- Check out newspapers (e.g. Business Times).

2. Getting Information from the Internet

Make extensive use of the Internet and use search engines such as google.com. Professional associations also have web sites where you can find most information available in the field. Another option is to identify discussion groups online and become a member.

Riley Guide provides information on business and employer rankings (www.rileyguide.com/busrank.html). Check out yahoo.com.

Also, visit the GF career services section that provides many job search links: http://www.newschool.edu/gf/students/career_job-search-links.htm

3. Contacting People in the Industry – Networking

General suggestions to get (more) contacts:

- Ask everybody you know for names of colleagues you might talk to.
- Become a member of one or more professional and student organization so that you can attend their local meetings and have direct contact to people who are in the field.
- Go to conferences and career fairs and talk to people.
- Contact alumni of your college/university.
- Become a member of online discussion/interest groups.
- Contact Chamber of Commerce.

Interview as many people as possible to avoid one-sided opinions. Find the similarities and overlaps in those interviews.

For more information on networking please see the [networking section](#)

4. Visit a Workplace; Job Shadowing

If possible, set up a visit on-site in order to get a sense for the work environment and for the work itself.

The best way to try out a career is to volunteer, to do an internship or to do project work. Usually, brief periods are enough to evaluate if this is the right career for you and if you should pursue this further. If you consider that this time may preserve you from choosing a wrong career in which you will suffer for a much longer time, this time is well invested. Another way of learning about a job is job shadowing, which allows a visitor to observe a host during a typical day and to ask questions about the particular career.

REMEMBER:

After the informational interview either on the phone or in person, or after job shadowing, you always need to send a thank you note. This is not only a common courtesy, but it also keeps you in the other person's mind. You never know what may come out of this.

References

Bolles, Richard Nelson (2001). *What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers*. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, Toronto.

Nemko M, Edwards P, Edwards S (2001). *Cool Careers For Dummies*. 2nd Edition. Wiley Publishing, Inc.