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Job Hunting Tips: Time Management

By Virginia Bola, PsyD

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There is an old adage that "Looking for a job is harder than working." How true! The rigors of job search are magnified by the turmoil we experience: lack of self-confidence, humiliation, financial pressure, and the undercurrent of emotions that color all we do: fear, anger, depression, anxiety, loss. One practical step we can take to lower the stress and conserve our energy for finding work, not feeding our bloated worries, is to manage our time effectively. Have you ever noticed that you get more chores done when you're busy? If time is limited, we squeeze in those extra demands because we know they have to get done by a deadline and we fear putting them off. When time is unlimited, such as when you take a few days off work, there is no pressure to rush—"I've got four days, I'll do it tomorrow." Suddenly, you are back at work and realize that you didn't accomplish half of what you had planned. This lack of structure is magnified when you are unemployed. There is no pressure to get up, get dressed, get out of the house by a specific time. We know we have things to do. We need to update our resume, create some new cover letters, research some possible job openings. It is so hard to get started because we hate having to do it, we don't feel creative or excited about the whole prospect, and we dread having to go through the horrors of interviewing. We procrastinate, telling ourselves that when we are ready, it will just "flow." For a few hours, a few days, we'll just indulge ourselves and relax. When the end of the month arrives and we compare our diminishing bank balance to our multiplying bills, we mentally beat ourselves up for not having accomplished what we had so earnestly intended. Now we generate our own pressure, magnified by guilt and self-reproach. Stress levels and blood pressure rise. We feel resentful, angry, depressed. "I didn't ask to get into this situation. It's unfair. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it." Adopting a reasonable schedule can avoid reaching this point. Try these ideas: 1. Take a day to do nothing but plan out what you are going to do, and when.

2. Concentrate on not over-committing yourself. You may be used to working 8 or more hours per day and think that is what you will now spend on job search. Remember that adage: your hunt for work is a lot more difficult than simply walking into a familiar employer and pursuing your daily routine. Recognize that and limit your job hunting to fewer hours per day.

3. If you rigorously limit your job hunt-related activities to 4 hours per day to start (you can always increase later), you may find yourself forced to stop before you are ready. This creates the impetus to

get you going the following day — you can hardly wait to get back to what you are working on.

4. When your "work time" is over, stop. Consciously focus your attention on relaxing: take a walk, read a book, throw a ball, watch television, whatever pleases you. You will be able to relax because you know you completed exactly what you planned. The guilt, and the sense of "I should have, I should be" no longer exist and you are free, for a short time anyway, to do anything you want.

5. Identify your priorities by looking at what day of the week is best for each kind of activity. If you are searching the classifieds, Sunday is the premium time to do it. If you are networking or cold calling, concentrate on the morning weekday hours. Agency visits, whether for temporary work or head hunting, can be relegated to the afternoons when employers are difficult to reach and already fatigued.

6. Analyze your own daily energy patterns and put them to work for you. Make sure that during your high energy periods you are "out there," contacting people and presenting yourself. Use your low energy times for solitary, mundane tasks: researching companies and jobs, organizing your paperwork, planning your next day's activities.

The inevitable stress of unemployment and job search can never be totally eliminated, but managing your time and being gentle with yourself can turn a painful situation into simply an uncomfortable nuisance.

Virginia Bola operated a rehabilitation company for 20 years, developing innovative job search techniques for disabled workers, while serving as a respected Vocational Expert in Administrative, Civil and Workers' Compensation Courts. Author of an interactive and emotionally supportive workbook, *The Wolf at the Door: An Unemployment Survival Manual*, and a monthly ezine, *The Worker's Edge*, she can be reached at <http://www.virginiabola.com>

From The WorkWise Collection: Job Hunting in the New Economy

By Mary Jeanne Vincent

To succeed in today's global marketplace, companies must hire the best and the brightest. Having talented employees can make the difference between success and failure.

Job hunting in this new economy is competitive, dynamic, results-driven, and requires your best efforts. In the past, jobs and careers were permanent, stable, and predictable. Today all of that has changed. Jobs, careers, and the world of work are transient, unpredictable, and involve risk. If you want to be successful, you have to take smart risks, know the rules, and play by them.

To set yourself apart from the competition, follow these job-hunting tips for the new economy:

1. Know what you have to offer. What are you selling? What specific skills, experience, and knowledge do you bring with you? The question employers want answered is: "What can you do for my organization?"

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2. Create solid marketing materials and package them well. Does your résumé present specific accomplishments, complete with results that demonstrate what you can do for a potential employer? If not, why not? Is it clean, neat, and easy to read?
3. Make it easy for employers to hire you. Think about a variety of options that could work for you and the employer. Keep an open mind about when, where, and how the work could be done. Cutting off the discussion too early can result in lost opportunities. Whereas maintaining an ongoing conversation can lead to innovative solutions that suit both parties.
4. Take the initiative in selling your services. Let people know what you have to offer. Give employers a reason to talk with you; they need to know the benefits that hiring you will provide them. Be prepared to offer that information, even if they don't ask for it.
5. Think about the employer's needs, not your agenda. Never mind your agenda (getting a job), think about their agenda (solving a problem). What problem are they trying to solve? Describe how you can help. Then follow up, follow up, follow up.

Apply these job hunting tips and you are sure to set yourself apart from the competition, shorten your job search, and find the work you love!

Hi, I'm Mary Jeanne Vincent. I help real job seekers just like you find jobs that meet the triple-F test: work that's fun, fulfilling, and financially rewarding. Ask about WorkWise Words of Wisdom Uncover Your Passion tip cards—50 easy-to-use tips guaranteed to jumpstart the process of finding the work

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