

Focus Your Job Hunt: Six Key Moves

by Elizabeth McKinley, Gannett News Service | original article at MSN Careers (2004)

A little focus can go a long way toward finding a job in a tough labor market. Keeping focused and positive is a state of mind, and you need to work at it when you're not seeing immediate results.

Identify target companies and ideal jobs.

If you're just sending a resume to online job listings, you're not doing enough. Before you even think about working on a resume, spend time identifying 10 companies you would like to work for and why. It's not enough to say you want a telecommunications job; go further and be specific. Know if you are interested in the company because of the industry, company goals, or proximity to your home. The more specific and detailed you are in your target companies, the more focused you'll be in a search.

Brush up on your job hunting skills.

Once you've focused your search to specific companies and goals, you're ready to work on your job search. You must tailor and customize your resume to fit what you're targeting. A blanket resume isn't good enough and probably won't get a second look from a hiring manager. Your resume should reflect accurately what you've done and match what a company is looking for. Focus the resume on what you're qualified to do for the company. The more you work on a resume, the better you'll be prepared for an interview. You'll already have spent time on your target companies and highlighted your skills to fit those, and you'll be an expert on yourself and the company for the interview.

Put your network to work.

Before you make a single phone call, remember that a good networking relationship is reciprocal. Think of how you can help your contacts - not just how they can help you get a job. The best networkers are givers, not takers. Ask your network members how you can help them - in addition to telling them about your specifics for the job search. Talk with people inside your target companies, and find out who to contact for informational interviews. Use all the tools you have to meet more contacts and position yourself as an expert in the industry.

Set mini goals and establish a routine.

Making goals for your job search will help keep you focused on the job search. They're reminders that you need to stay active and positive in your search. Goals don't have to be elaborate; they can be as simple as:

- Work on your resume
- Identify five people to contact at target company
- Set up a meeting with a network member
- Call someone in your network you haven't spoken to in a month

Balance your mind and stay positive.

All job searching, all the time won't help you stay balanced and focused for very long. Start with taking care of your physical well being through exercise and eating healthy. Fueling your body will help create positive energy for your mind. If you're out of work, get involved in the community by volunteering. Giving your time will give you a sense of accomplishment and help boost your confidence. Although staying positive in a prolonged job search is a challenge, it's essential to do so. Employers pick up on desperate and negative vibes in interviews. You don't want to come across as someone who would be difficult to work with. Your soft skills, or people skills, are just as important as professional ability. Find that balance to give yourself focus, confidence and energy. Reward yourself with little treats along the job search path.

Give yourself permission to be frustrated.

It's possible to be doing all the right things in a job search and still not find a job. It's a tough economy and job market, and it's not your fault if there are no jobs. Don't get discouraged. Instead, review what you've been doing and look for opportunities to improve. Ask for feedback and be open to criticism - you may not be describing yourself and your skills in the right way. Think about ways you can market yourself even more and stand out above other job seekers.

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Have Questions?

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