

What to do When Nothing Works How to Get Your Job Search Back on Track

By Clay Parsons

You have been looking for a job for almost a year. The last time someone responded to a resume and cover letter you sent out was over two months ago. You are doing everything the 'How To' books tell you to do. Nothing is working. You are frustrated and angry and it is starting to rub off on everyone around you. You need a job.

What do you do to get your job search back on track?

First of all, unless the current economy has gone south, and we are all out of work, there is a specific reason that you have been unsuccessful. There is not something 'wrong' with you and it is not a question of bad luck. Your task is to find out why.

Your first step is to get some professional advice. You are too close to the problem, and your friends and relatives, despite their genuine concern cannot be objective.

GET SOME HELP

Research your local market and find a career counselor and coach with the proper credentials. Make sure they have lots of experience working with people like you and preferably a graduate degree in the field of career development. You will also need someone who knows the world of work first hand to assess what you have been doing, make a correct diagnosis and prescribe a practical solution. Next, list and describe all of your job search activities and with the guidance of your career counselor look for anything which could cause problems. I have found in my practice that this search needs to include the following five categories.

YOUR STRATEGY

Several elements of a typical job search strategy are potential culprits. Are you taking a passive, 'digital' approach and not going out and meeting people? The statistics say that this approach alone does not work. Too much competition. Are you doing your homework with each job application? Have you researched the company where you are applying? Is your knowledge of the targeted position reflected in the 'focus' of your resume? Have you developed a personal 'script' where you think through and answer some of the more difficult questions you will be asked during an informal meeting or interview? Are you comfortable using your script?

SELF SABOTAGE

Self sabotage is a common problem. Try to remember the interviews and meetings you have attended. Have you fallen victim to any self defeating behavior? For example, do you talk too much – an easy way to put your foot in your mouth; are you too aggressive, too intense – you may scare away your interviewer; or do you come across as a know-it-all in interviews? This turns many people off. Are you a positive or negative person? Have you been feeling frustrated and depressed recently? Leave your negativity at the door. It will kill any interview. Do you have difficulty answering questions? Are you indecisive? Any of these can send the wrong message.

THE MARKETPLACE

The marketplace must support a job search for it to be successful. For example, is the job or role you are looking for the correct one? Is there still a demand for that position? If you have been out of work for any length of time your field may have changed. Does your skill set and experience fit with what you are applying for? Should you add to your skills to be more competitive? Is your field growing or contracting? Should you change or modify your focus?

SOCIAL OR CULTURAL ISSUES

Social or cultural issues can also influence job search results. For example do you fit into the workplace culture where you are applying? Does your language fit, clothes fit, and even personal ideology fit? This may seem irrelevant but in some companies the wrong image or values, especially if you make them known, spell rejection. Also discrimination in all of it's forms is alive and well in the workplace. If you run into illegal behavior during an interview make sure you have thought about the issue beforehand. Do you really want to work for that company?

CUSTOM DESIGN YOUR RESPONSE

When you and your career counselor have identified the problem, custom design a response to fit your needs and abilities. For example, if you are an introvert begin networking with people you already know and then reach out from there. Join a job search support group of people in your industry. If you need to practice answering difficult questions do role play sessions with your counselor. If you need to add some skills sign-up for a local university extension class. And remember to be good to yourself. Take some time off regularly and go out to dinner with the family or go for a hike. Try to keep emotionally 'up' as much as possible.

Finally, please remember that we all make mistakes! Even the most capable person will put their foot in their mouth once in awhile. Try to look at the humorous side of it. Smile and move on.

And if I can help let me know.

Clay Parsons
Alternative Futures
(510) 287-5664