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HOW TO BE A REAL CONTENDER IN THE *job market*

Losing your job can come as a bitter blow, but if you play it right, it can also be a blessing in disguise. Jane Jackson looks at how to turn trauma into triumph.

Change can be pretty scary and if you are in between jobs or facing a redundancy, it can leave you feeling confused, anxious, fearful and stressed. This emotional rollercoaster can erode your self-confidence and create confusion about what to do next.

If your job search is taking longer than you anticipated, it's time to regroup, rethink and reassess your strategy.

In my experience, there are seven common mistakes that job seekers make, but they can be avoided through careful assessment, research and planning. The secret is to turn those mistakes into a seven-step path to success. Here we go.

1 BE POSITIVE
If you're still hurting from being in a difficult situation, it's a big mistake to market yourself when you are feeling emotional and your confidence is low. After all, if you don't believe in yourself, who will?

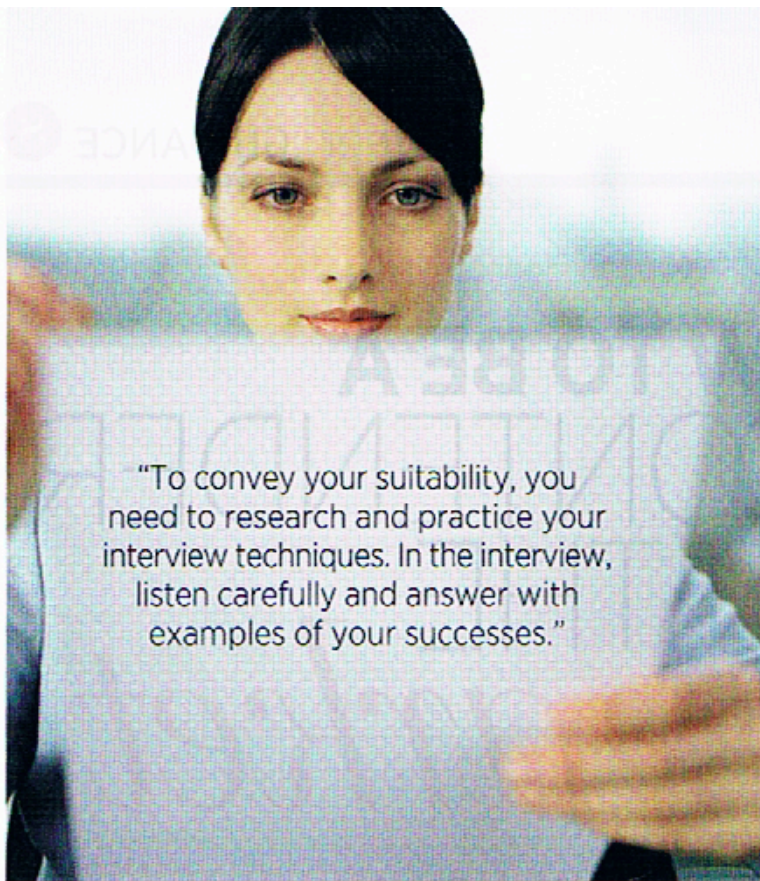
SOLUTION: It's best to market yourself after you have accepted your new situation,

acknowledged that there are some things you cannot change and identified the things you can. Rebuild your self-confidence and get into the right frame of mind for the job search. The key is to remember that you are still the same competent professional you've always been and you have a mountain of value to offer the right employer in the right environment.

2 KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

If you haven't assessed what drives you in your career or what your specific skills, knowledge and key motivators are, you may be applying for roles that are not suited to you.

SOLUTION: Work out what makes you tick and the reasons why a role appeals to you. Employers will want to know how close a "fit" you are to their needs, their corporate culture and team environment. Prepare well so that you can eloquently communicate your value, key drivers and be authentic in your responses. >



"To convey your suitability, you need to research and practice your interview techniques. In the interview, listen carefully and answer with examples of your successes."



Jane Jackson is a career management coach, an executive consultant at Lee Hecht Harrison and author of *Navigating Career Crossroads: How To Thrive When Changing Direction* (Palmer Higgs, 2014). Visit janejacksoncoach.com for more tips and free downloads of career resources.

3 HAVE FOCUSED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

It is tempting to save time by sending out the same generic résumé and cover letter for every job application, but if you find you are not getting a positive response, this could be the reason.

SOLUTION: Your résumé and cover letter often are the first point of contact with the screener, so tailor them effectively for each and every role (see tips on how to make your résumé a winner, opposite). Mentally prepare a strong positioning statement so if anyone asks, "So, why are you looking for a job?", you have a good answer ready.

4 LOOK THE PART IN PERSON OR ONLINE

Amidst all the scouring of job ads and sending off of applications, it is easy to overlook the image you are projecting. Potential employers may be able to view your LinkedIn profile and other social media sites and will form an opinion of you before that first handshake.

SOLUTION: Do your research to find out what will be appropriate attire for the interview and on the job. First impressions are very important, so think about what others will see when you walk into a room. On social media, be smart and discreet. Position yourself honestly and professionally.

5 USE ALL THE JOB SEARCH METHODS EFFECTIVELY

There is a natural temptation to focus mainly on advertised roles, but this is really only one part of the story and it may not always be the one that will get you the required result.

SOLUTION: Brush up on your networking skills, touch base with those who might be able to help you or point you forward and expand your network to uncover the hidden jobs (see our story on how to land the jobs that aren't advertised, page 94). Recruitment consultants are another option, but you need to know what they are looking for and to make it clear to them what you have to offer. Just being on LinkedIn is not enough – you have to be proactive and leverage it effectively.

6 CONVEY YOUR VALUE IN INTERVIEWS

Because job hunting is so arduous, it is easy to think that securing a job interview is the hard part and that the interview itself will be easy or easier. Yet this is where many people fall short.

SOLUTION: The key to successful interviews is to prepare, prepare, prepare! Employers are looking for someone to provide the functional and soft skills required for the role, and someone who is willing to work the way that fits in with the culture of their team. To convey your suitability, you need to research and practice your interview techniques beforehand. In the interview, listen carefully to the questions and answer with examples of your successes, without sounding overconfident. After the interview, follow up with a "thank you" email.

7 KNOW YOUR TRUE WORTH

An overlooked part of the job hunting process is knowing what the market rate is for the role. When it comes to salary negotiations, it is hard to secure a good outcome for either party if you have no idea of the parameters.

SOLUTION: Do your research to be sure you know what you're worth in the current market. At the same time, if you want to clinch landing the job, you have got to deliver a good outcome for the new employer as well as yourself. The deal must feel like a win-win situation.