

What to do if your job hunting has hit a dead end

Your job search is dead in the water, even though you have done everything you can think of to find a new position. You have written an excellent CV and you have used all your network contacts. It did not work. Now what do you do?

Almost 75% of all job seekers hit a rock on the path to finding a new job. Searches break down at different stages for different people. Some people cannot get job leads. Others land interviews but no offers. To get your momentum going again, the first thing to do is to analyse the factors that are holding you back.

It may not be the easiest task you have ever done but it is important. After a while of things not going your way the majority of people are very hard on themselves. This is when you cannot see the wood from the trees and you will need an outside perspective.

Step 1: Find someone whom you can talk with and who can help you pin-point what is going wrong. It is unlikely that you are doing everything wrong, probably just one or two things. Figuring this out can be a needle in the haystack if you are trying to find the problem on your own.

Often, job seekers think they should know how to job hunt instinctively. Apparently, job hunting is a natural talent that everyone is born with (not the case). So when things are not working out they get defensive and unreceptive to suggestions. Try to keep an open mind and to not dismiss the suggestions you receive. The bottom line is if what you are currently doing is not working then you will need to change certain aspects of your job hunt until you start to see positive results.

Step 2: Do an analysis with your confident / counsellor to find out what is going wrong. What's holding you back?

Emotional issues: Evaluate how you are viewing life and your job search. Figure out what you can do to make yourself feel better. It is hard to say which comes first, a negative attitude or a hindered job search. Remember that attitude alone can cause a job search to halt. Depression or despondency is one of the most common reasons why job hunters cannot achieve results. Candidates may feel that events are beyond their control and become defeatist. This affects all their job-hunting activities, from making calls to employers to interviewing.

Where is your focus? Lack of focus can weaken your CV or cause you to seem desperate because you are likely to seek roles just because they are available. Define your career goals. What do you want to achieve from your career? Now ask, what do you need to do to achieve this? If you are not focused on the end result you want you will not be able to guide yourself down the right path. A lack of focus alone will halt your job hunt.

How good are your self-marketing skills? Marketing requires finding customers who want your product and then creating materials and a presentation that positions it as the solution to a problem. Everyone knows this. So why then do so many job seekers still believe they will get hired based on what they have done previously, rather than what they can help an employer achieve in the future? They prepare CV's that do not include their accomplishments and are too modest during interviews. You are the product. Find out why someone would want to buy you. What problem can you solve and what benefits do you currently possess that employers want?

Are you using your network? What is this networking anyway? It is the process of talking with people who might have information that could lead you closer to employment. Since networking often creates

leads to people who know of unadvertised jobs, it is considered the best way to find a position. However, many job hunters do not understand how to network or refuse to do it because they fear seeming needy. Get this out of your head. Networks work both ways. People will use you as part of their network to get what they want. Why can't you do the same?

Have you got a job hunting plan to follow? Finding a job requires accomplishing a series of interim goals, such as securing references, writing a CV, calling networking referrals or practicing mock interviews etc. Many job hunters whose searches have halted have not created a structure that prompts them to complete these activities. Delegate your available time over all the job hunting tasks. Write a list of what you need to do. Prioritise it, schedule it, put a time frame on it and start following the plan. People who fail to plan fail. What made you think job hunting was any different?

Stop being hard on yourself. Turn over a new leaf and start again.

The first step to kick-starting a search is recognising you may have problems you are not aware of and to act as quickly as possible to resolve them. This way, you will not have to undo mistakes you have made.

If you have been feeling depressed or defeated, your first goal should be to improve your outlook.

Here are the steps suggested to reviving a job hunt:

1. Improve your state of mind. Physical activity helps improve mental well-being, so start exercising or going for walks if you are not already doing so. Be sure you schedule time to be with friends and family, or simply spend time with a pet. Above all, do not stay cooped up in a home office for eight hours a day.

2. Create a group of advisers for yourself. Seek feedback on your progress and be available to give advice to others. You may gain valuable information and insights. Moreover, being around other people is an antidote to depression.

3. Accomplish something worthwhile. If you are feeling like you have no control over events, choose an activity or task you have been meaning to do and finish it. The chore need not be related to your career or job hunting. It could be as simple as cleaning out a garage or painting a room. The mere act of accomplishing something will make you feel better about yourself and more in control.

4. Create structure for yourself. Each week, create a schedule outlining your goals for that week, and make sure you accomplish them. Do the difficult tasks first and reward yourself when you accomplish them with enjoyable activities, such as going to the cinema with a friend. Your sense of well-being will improve as you reach these goals.

5. Follow through. Act on the suggestions you receive from advisers. After determining your focus, prepare a CV that targets these goals. Ask your advisers for feedback on your marketing documents. Research companies and hiring managers in your targeted industry and approach them directly. Some candidates find that writing a personal letter, then following up with a phone call, is easiest.

6. Spend the majority of your time on the most productive tasks. Limit your Internet activity to a maximum of about 15% to 20% of your search time. You may not realise that applying for jobs posted on the Internet decreases your chances of being hired because the competition is greatest for these positions. Contacting hiring managers personally increases your chances because fewer people are likely to do so. To ensure you do not stay on the Internet too long, set a timer for your allotted length and turn off the computer when the timer goes off.

7. Increase the time you spend networking. Develop networking contacts by asking everyone you contact if they can suggest names of others for you to call. Offer to discuss what you have learned about the job market with people you talk with.

8. Do not expect quick results. Candidates who are committed to hard work are more likely to persist in the face of adversity than those who do not understand the challenges they face. You have to pace yourself and not try to complete everything at once because you are at risk of crashing and burning, and then you might not do anything for a month or two. Keep it slow and steady and you then you will always be moving towards you career goal.

If you know someone else who is faced with the above problem then please pass this article on to them. They will appreciate it.

This article had been written and brought to you by CPG Executive Consulting

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