

JOB-SEARCH MYTHS

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Job searching is not a new pastime, in fact it is quite old but it carries with it myths that are equally old, in many cases are invalid and in some cases downright damaging. Here then is a list of a few myths and suggestion of how they might otherwise be approached.

The Myths

1. "If I don't fit the 'normal' (right age, right experience, right sex, right language, right race, right country) mold, I don't have much of a chance."
2. Employers are looking for too much in a candidate
3. High tech employers want people who can hit the ground running with the exactly the right skills.
4. If you have been out of the work force a number of years it is very difficult to get back in.
5. If a downturn in the economy eliminates a lot of jobs in my trade, I don't have much of a chance.
6. If you are over-qualified you should downplay your skills on your resume
7. If I fine-tune my resume my chances of acceptance will increase.
8. You should upgrade your skills before you begin to apply for a new job.
9. To negotiate a good salary study the available salary scales in your profession carefully.
10. Most jobs are in the public job domain, namely: online job boards, newspapers, career fairs, etc.
11. It's who you know that counts, not what you know.
12. Candidate selection is mostly about skills and secondarily about personality.

Dealing with The Myths

1. *"If I don't fit the 'normal' (right age, right experience, right sex, right language, right race, right country) mold, I don't have much of a chance": **wrong**.* Employers care whether or not you can deliver the goods that they want delivered. Find the employer that matches your skills and approach to the job and you will be able to deliver the goods. Better still, you will be able to demonstrate that you can.
2. *Employers are looking for too much in a candidate: **wrong**.* Employers with a sensible attitude know what they want and they know what people can deliver. If they ask for more than people in the profession can give, perhaps there is a hidden agenda at work.
3. *High tech employers want people who can hit the ground running with the right skills: **wrong**.* Some do of course, but not most. Usually such a demand is in the 'consulting' domain where exact skill match is expected and the pay scale is set accordingly. The reality is that most employers look for both skills and personality fit, which includes attitude towards that particular work environment.
4. *If you have been out of the work force a number of years it is very difficult to get back in: **wrong**.* If you can deliver the goods, that is all that matters. You must match yourself to someone who likes what you have to offer today.
5. *If a downturn in the economy eliminates a lot of jobs in my trade, I don't have much of a chance: **wrong**.* You are not looking for all the jobs that the economy and your trade have to offer, just one. All job situations, no matter how low the

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employment levels, have job dynamics – people leaving, quitting, getting promoted, becoming pregnant – that is, they undergo constant change. You want to hit onto one of those changes within your field. There are 130 such positions created each day in Ottawa's depressed job market.

6. *If you are over-qualified you should downplay your skills on your resume: **wrong**.* Never lie or imply something that is otherwise. That's the ethical part. You are over-qualified only if you are looking for a job that is under-qualified for you. Search for a job that fits your skills and personality. If you can't seem to find it, get a professional career coach to assist you.

7. *If I fine-tune my resume my chances of acceptance will increase: **wrong**.* No matter how often or in which manner you paint a submarine, it still will not fly. There must be fundamental match between your skill (and personality) and the job you are seeking.

8. *You should upgrade your skills before you apply for that job: **wrong**.* Upgrading skills is speculative (and sometimes it is an excuse to stop looking for a job). Instead (spend that same money on a career coach, and) put your effort into finding a job that fits your existing skills. Then, when you have won that job, get the training that fits the job – no more speculation, no further misuse of your funds and you are of more use to your new employer.

9. *To negotiate a good salary study the available salary scales in your profession carefully: **not wrong, but not absolutely correct**.* Negotiating a good salary has everything to do with knowing when you have the advantage to negotiate and finding out how much that particular employer has available for your job. Then it is a matter of getting all of it into your hands.

10. *Most jobs are in the public job domain, namely: online job boards, newspapers, career fairs, etc.: **wrong**.* 60 to

70% of all job opportunities lie elsewhere, hidden away from popular view. A further multiplier works to your advantage in that only 1 or 2 people are applying for these unseen jobs vs. dozens if not hundreds for the public jobs. Look at the mathematics:

Public:

40% of jobs, 12 applicants = $40 \times 1/12^1$ chance = **3.3%**

Unseen:

60% of jobs, 2 applicants = $60 \times 1/2$ chance = **30%**

The unseen market offers at least a 10 times advantage.

11. *It's who you know that counts, not what you know: **wrong and right**.* The wrong part is that you must have the skills otherwise you will not be considered. However who you know or run into usually leads to the right job opportunity. Therefore you must increase the "who's" by networking.

12. *Candidate selection is mostly about skills and secondarily about personality: **wrong**.* For every job posted there are dozens of people with the skills – so that's the easy part. But for every job posted only one person is chosen who the employer thinks has the personality to fit into that particular organization. Matching personality is the difficult part unless you have some method. Did you realize that 46% of all new hires leave the job within 18 months; it is not because they suddenly lost their skills, but because of personality mismatch.

Conclusions

Professional career coaching deals with all these issues on a continuous basis. You can deal with some on your own as long as you point yourself in the right direction.

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