

Getting Help

One of the most important activities for finding a new job in a slow economy is networking – finding as many of the right people who can lead you to your next job as possible. If you're newly unemployed and don't know what you're looking for in your next job, avoid broadcasting your availability far and wide until you have had a chance to define your career goals and formulate a job search strategy.

But once you are clear and focused, ask for the help you need. There are dozens, possibly hundreds, of people who are willing to help you. Some you know now and others you'll meet in the job search process. This is no time to be timid about asking for what you want. The clearer you are about what you need, the easier it is for people to help you.

While you may expect family and friends to be helpful and supportive, be aware that the opposite is also possible. They may be worried for their own reasons about you not having a job and can't really be there to help you. They may, in fact, be negative influences on you, draining you of optimism and the energy you need to focus on your job search. It's best to have as little contact with them as possible during your job search. This can be difficult when you share living space.

Join or create a job search support team that will be there for you. Most large cities have organizations that sponsor job search groups and state supported agencies also have such resources. Check your local telephone directory or search online for one near you. Check out Barbara Sher's book, *Wishcraft*, for ideas about starting a success team.

How long will it take?

There's no one answer for this question. The two things that make a difference are your attitude and how hard you work at your job search. If you are a pessimistic person and everyone can see that in your behavior and

negative talk, your job search will take longer. Also, if you are putting in 20 hours a week only answering ads and waiting for phone calls, your job search will take a lot longer! Think and act positively, work hard AND smart, spending time doing the job search activities that have a high return – research, networking, writing effective cover letters and résumés, and interviewing well.

Always keep in mind that you are still a marketing manager, finance executive, nurse, retail associate, administrative professional, engineer or ---- (you fill in the blank). This is true even if you're not currently working for anyone. A job may go away, but how you define yourself does not go away. And remember, you're much more than your job title. Sometimes it's hard to keep that in mind when the job search drags on, but a few days volunteering for a charitable organization will restore your sense of value. Try it and see.

You WILL get another job -- it's just a matter of how long it will take. If you truly want to work, you will find a job, guaranteed. It may not be your ideal job, but all jobs can teach you something. And a paycheck will put food on the table. If it's not your ideal job, keep looking and networking with all the new contacts you'll be meeting in your new position.

The Real Reason You Get Hired

You may be the perfect candidate on paper, with every skill a job requires, yet you don't get an offer. Haven't you known someone who was hired for a job, but didn't have the skills listed in the job description? (Maybe you even worked with someone like this.) How did they get hired and you didn't?

People hire people they know and like. This may not seem fair, but since the people hiring you probably have to spend a lot of time with you, they want to like you. Of course they won't say, "I just don't like you, so I won't hire you." Instead, they'll say something like, "We've found another candidate who's a better fit for the position." If you hear something like, "I like your thinking." or "Just what I would've done." then you stand a good chance of being invited

back for another round of interviews. Look around. Are you like the other people in the department, the company? If so, again there's a good chance you'll be invited back.

So what can you do about all this? Since people hire people they "know," it's important for you to become "known." You do this through networking. If someone can recommend you to someone else, you've become known and you're no longer just a stranger who sent in a résumé. The value of effective networking can't be emphasized enough. It's probably THE most important factor in getting a job in a slow economy.

You can also work at being "likeable." In interviews, be positive, look interested, smile and nod on occasion, and take notes. Try to recognize common thoughts or points of view. If you're interviewing with a team, try to establish good rapport with each of the members. Once you're hired keep looking for things you have in common with your co-workers and stay upbeat. If this seems like too much work, it's probably not the right place for you to be working. Keep interviewing until the "fit" seems right. Or take the job and keep your eyes and ears open for another position that will be a better match for your skills and style.