

## Getting Any Job You Want

Do I like it? Am I good at it? Does the world need it? Does my conscience direct me to get involved in it? If you can answer a good solid “Yes” to all four questions then you’ve got a *great* job—one worth going after or keeping. You may have to analyze deeper to know whether you can even answer these four questions. The exploration of these questions is a journey of uncovering what you really want to give your work life to. Taking the time to develop a clear vision on what’s truly important to you will give you the context and the positive energy to make all career and job decisions.

Now what if you do not yet have this “dream” job? Well, the world has profoundly changed over the past 10 years. The shift from the Industrial Age to the Information and Knowledge Worker Age is sweeping the country and totally changing the way business operates. The marketplace has become intensely customer-oriented, but this customer-focus has not yet affected most of those who are out looking for jobs.

The key to getting the job you want is to be oriented to the needs and wants of your customer, which is your prospective employer. Get out of your head and into theirs.

The traditional approach of sending out resumes, seeking employment interviews and filling out applications is illustrative of the old world approach to getting a job. It’s what I refer to as the “shotgun” approach, where your exposure to the market is very broad. The problem is that to the organizations that receive your resume, you are one of many hundreds or even thousands trying to get a job. Personnel offices are absolutely inundated with letters, resumes and phone calls from people who want work. As good or experienced as you may be, to most of them you are a “problem,” a “hassle,” one of a stack of letters or calls they have to answer today.

I do not mean to sound harsh, but this is the reality in most organizations in today’s rapidly changing and globally competitive environment. They are dealing with the pain of extensive downsizing and outsourcing. But there are jobs everywhere disguised as problems, even the problem of downsizing. The old saying is apt that “Problems are opportunities dressed in overalls.”

Bottom line, the shotgun approach of just sending out resumes and giving follow-up calls will, for the most part, rarely yield results better than you are getting. Why? Because those who look for work in this way are behaving as if *they* are the customer. Customers approach companies with a need and a problem that they want solved—in this case, the need is work—a job. Businesses already have more real customer needs and problems than they can handle. Can you see who and what you are competing with when you approach a company in this way? What you must be is a *solution* to the needs and problems which that organization and *their* customers face, not another problem.

If you are going to position yourself as a solution to some significant need or opportunity that an organization faces, you are going to have to take a rifle approach—one that focuses and penetrates deeply. You are going to have to be enormously resourceful and creative in learning about the organization you want to work for. Creativity is a unique human endowment, and is a powerful capacity that lies largely dormant in most people. Unfreeze yourself from the panic and nervousness you may feel about not having a job, and start immersing yourself in the realities of the company you want to work for. Creatively find ways of talking with and learning from the company's employees and managers—talk to their suppliers, their customers, and even their competitors. Reach the point that you can describe their challenges and needs as well as or better than they could themselves. Then you can position yourself—your unique background, skills, education, experience and talents (some of which you may need to further develop first)—in the context of their needs. Your resourcefulness and insight will deeply impress them.

Finally, in your creative research it is vital to learn about the culture and norms of the organization. Every organization is different. This awareness should govern how you should approach the organization for an interview or meeting with their managers or executives. Be creative. It will be different in every case—for proactivity without empathy and awareness will also bring failure. Combine them, and you will have the wisdom that will bring tremendous results.

I acknowledge there will likely be few people who will take this advice and pay a sufficient price to really get the job and career they seek. Consequently, they will still be coming up with excuses as to why they're not getting employment: blaming the economy, blaming the company, blaming prejudiced people, or blaming themselves. Work to get out of the reactive attitude of waiting for things to happen. Einstein put it this way, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." We must get with the spirit of the age, and gear ourselves to the needs of "our customer."