

Job Coaching – Core Concepts – Dave Crisp, July 2009 www.balance-and-results.com

Job search coaching has one aim – to speed up the trial and error learning curve that most of us go through when first embarking on job search. The searcher still has to do the work, but knowing what works best or common errors can be a benefit, given that we so rarely have to undertake this.

The Core Principles That Work (Others Don't)

1. Networking is how most jobs are found and how most employers hope to fill their openings. Help them!
2. Answering ads (now mostly electronic) still accounts for about 20% of hires and so is worth doing, just not for the majority of your time. For electronic applications, have a resume that reads well in “RTF” not just “DOC” or PDF formats. That way it can be copied more easily without losing formatting and can be sent inside your emails as well as being attached so if attachments are screened out or can't be opened, the recipient can still see your information. Be aware margins and boxes around paragraphs are first to get out of alignment, especially right margins – so leave a wider margin than you would ordinarily. A free or paid ‘clipboard extender’ program (for free try clipmagic.com) can ease the endless copy and paste operations required to fill in many online application pages. Using a third page on your resume with the header “Appendix – Additional areas of experience” allows you to simply list all the acronyms, trade terms, jargon, etc., associated with your experience in case an automated resume reader is set to look for specific terms and flag only resumes with those in them.
3. Networking doesn't require extensive time with each individual – as someone said, “It isn't who you know; it's who you vaguely know.” It really doesn't matter whether your excuse is asking for advice or offering something, but don't ignore their needs completely. The key is to strive for reciprocity. If you inform lots of people and make it easy to remember, they'll pass your information on when others ask if they know someone in your area.
4. Some individuals will network, some won't. The only way to know is to ask. Best is asking for an ‘information interview’ or ‘advice’ if they work in a company or industry that interests you – that is: “would you take a few minutes and give me advice; I'm just starting a job search and your insight would help me focus” is an accepted approach. People love to give ‘advice.’ It often pulls them in. It's non-threatening, quick to do and useful to them as well. They become more of an information hub for others. Many people see that as a value to them.
5. The key to networking is the 10-second ‘elevator speech’ (not 30 seconds any more – attention is precious and shorter than ever.) It sets the tone for the four elements of the search. The **10 second speech** should be exciting enough for them to ask a question for more information; it should set tone and core ideas for the **cover letter**, which should set tone and ideas for the **resume**, which should set tone and ideas for the **job interview**. Each should tell the same story in progressively longer (but still quite short) sentences or bullets that leave the recipient wanting more. There's a game – ‘write a book in six words’ – a good way to think of how you need to tailor all your communication in job search – very short, but intriguing, interesting possibilities.
6. Here's the paradoxical core concept. Long-winded intros, answers, explanations and complicated descriptions of what you want and why cause the search to stall. People will/can only recall one thing you want and one reason why. You want them to keep these in mind... so make it completely clear and easy. They will ask if you can do other things, so you don't need to worry that you're cutting yourself off from opportunities. You cut yourself off if they can't recall what you do and want. Once you've mastered the right approach, you can modify it as you go and as you see varied opportunities, but never talk to one individual about more than one type of job. The briefer and more focused you are the easier it is to talk to people (and to expect them to listen) so you

will have fewer hesitations about 'bothering people' or worrying they will be annoyed. If they seem so, just move on to others, even those in the same companies. Give up on individuals, not companies.

7. Remember you're asking for advice – who to talk to, who knows who to talk to and who knows what areas might be hiring – very straight forward questions. You aren't asking anyone for an actual job (which you and they would feel uncomfortable with). Your aim throughout is to get closer and closer to identifying the location of a vacancy by asking who knows people, companies, departments that might have an interest in what you do. (If the person you're talking to has an opening, it's up to them to decide if they mention it. If they need it filled, chances are they will if you come close to the spec.)
8. Once you hear of a vacancy, you can use the same tools – ask for an information interview, giving your 10-second speech, then send a cover letter and resume. Follow up to see if they got these, using phone first and then email if phone doesn't get through. Be friendly with admin assistants and ask for advice (same technique) – "Is he or she the right person to send stuff to, what would be the best time to call when I'd likely connect, etc." Try calls before and after regular work hours (when people are most likely to answer their own phones). Have a script ready for either a live person or an answering machine. Follow the script. Many sales people prop a small mirror beside the phone so you see your happy smile when calling. When you smile you sound relaxed, pleasant, easier to deal with and help.
9. In job interviews, tell the same consistent story as your speech, cover letter and resume. In fact having the resume in front of you can be a sort of script. Bring a spare for them, too. Understand you are trying to 'tell the story' of why you love this work and how you know you're good at it. A story is the most powerful way to communicate. Doing it well means doing it without any extra words or ideas. Focus! If in doubt, give an answer that is "too short" or "incomplete" and ask "would you like to know more?" This is the best advice for interviewing bar none! Don't talk yourself out of a job!
10. Once you have these principles in place, it's a numbers game. The good news is turnover in most jobs is between 1 in 6 to 1 in 10 every year. So if your area has 500 people in a certain type of job, that's 50 or more openings a year. You need to find only one that's offered by a hiring manager who sees your particular strengths for the role. If you have strengths for it and focus on what they are positively in your 10-second speech, cover letter, resume and interview... and nothing else... and this will ensure you seem able to communicate effectively and appear like a person who will fit in (this you have little control over, but you can at least try to seem personable, friendly, helpful, curious and open) - then you'll succeed. Your task is to take your short story to as many people who might know where these jobs are as possible... and one will click. Figure out and practice answering positively all the tough questions you may get. Plan very brief answers only – try to exude confidence in yourself.

Bonus hints:

1. Add your free LinkedIn address on a business card – it provides your LinkedIn 'resume' to contacts easily.
2. Subject line of emails is best as "Resume of John Smith, Biochemical Engineer" so whenever the recipient scans their resume file they needn't open yours to see what you do and want. Don't use just 'My Resume.'
3. The only way to build confidence is through practice. Practicing these short steps with all contacts means you become comfortable and smooth as reeling off your short story very quickly. It gets better every time!

Good luck!