

# Top Strategies for Speeding up Your Job Search

By Dean DeGroot

In today's job market, your job search is likely to be more prolonged than in the past. According to the U.S. Department of Labor in 2011, the average length of a job was eight months, with the amount of time increasing according to salary earned.

Given these conditions, it's important to find ways to speed up the process and make it more efficient. Here are three ways to ensure you're moving forward and not just spinning your wheels.

## Find a Focus for Your Search

As the saying goes, if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there? Do you know, for example, what your job target is? What skills, abilities, values, and interests you bring to a position? What demand there is for the work you want to do? An effective search demands focus.

To understand yourself better, do a career self-assessment, take time to reflect on past accomplishments, and write down things you're passionate about. If you're not good at this kind of self-reflection, ask a trusted friend, family member, or colleague for feedback. What do they see as your strengths, weaknesses, and possible roles? This may be a difficult but usually beneficial discussion.

To learn more about a job target or current trends in the job market, commit to doing some serious research. Read the papers, check the Internet, and visit your local library. Libraries have some great resources like business indexes and journals, and librarians are always happy to help you.

## Reach Out through Networking

If you're isolated from others, your job search will be that much slower. If you don't currently have a network, don't despair. Start by asking your friends, family, or colleagues for help or referrals. This will give your job search some much-needed momentum.

In addition, take advantage of job transition groups in your community. These groups, which meet at work centers, libraries, and other venues, allow you meet others with similar goals, share ideas, and start building your network. This site provides times/locations of various transition groups in the greater Twin Cities (MN) area: <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/workforce-centers/networking/>

Perhaps the best networking resource I've seen in recent years is the book *The 20-Minute Networking Meeting*. Marcia Ballinger with Nathan Perez provide a compact, step-by-step process for staying focused in your networking meeting and winning people over as advocates of your search efforts.

## **Polish Your Presentation**

As you start to get out there and interact with others, the way you describe yourself and what you offer becomes critical to your success. Two aspects of your presentation to be particularly aware of: articulating your key marketing points and polishing your nonverbal presentation.

To articulate your key marketing points effectively, you must have a clear idea of what you offer and how you're different. This is where the focus mentioned earlier is critical. Know what value you bring that distinguishes you from the competition, and be able to communicate it concisely. Today, individuals need to understand the concept of "brand", whether it's in an interpersonal interaction or on your LinkedIn webpage. William Arruda & Kirsten Dixson illustrate the power of standing out in their book *Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand*.

As you interact with others during networking and at interviews, how you look, smile, sit, stand, and make eye contact can all have a major impact. In addition, a positive attitude, confident voice, and good listening skills help drive your message and clinch that all-important interview.

In a tough job market, you can expect a longer job search. But if you're focused, connected, and polished in your presentation, you'll be in a better position to streamline your search and land the job that's right for you.

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