Alumni Job Search Intensive – Barriers to Success & Moving Forward

Transcript

Slide 1: In this final webinar in the intensive program, I want to address some common barriers or obstacles to success and offer some final thoughts as you move forward with your search.

Slide 2: Take a minute to think about where you are in your job search process. After gaining the information in this program are you ready to implement your job search? Or is the timing not right, but you’ll keep this information for future reference? Or are you ready to search but feel there’s something holding you back?

Slide 3: I do encourage you to acknowledge and admit what might be holding you back in your job search and to find ways to deal with these obstacles. This is a soul searching thing, to think about what is really keeping you from achieving success in your job search. Some of these obstacles that are common might include ageism, or fear of being discriminated against due to your age. Maybe a fear of the job search process in general. Maybe a fear of rejection. Maybe you’re an introvert and don’t like networking. Procrastination could be another common obstacle. Maybe you’re feeling overwhelmed and not knowing how to get started or getting stuck at a certain step and you might have other obstacles on your own that we haven’t talked about. But it’s important to realize just how much your attitude affects your success or lack of success. Recognizing the obstacles is the first step in overcoming them. Your advisor in our office can help in this process as well, to kind of unstick you. Make sure you do use your support system as well, all of your family and friends, they are all there for you when you’re in the job search mode, members of your professional association, colleagues and former coworkers. If you are feeling depressed, you might need counseling. Don't hesitate to take advantage of all the resources that are available to you.

Slide 4: I’ve heard from many of you who have expressed concern about some of these specific obstacles they feel are holding them back in their job search, so I want to take a little time to address each of these.

Slide 5: Gaps can occur for a variety of valid reasons, including layoffs, deliberate time off for child rearing, etc. These are not all that unusual in the business world. If this issue comes up with an employer, in an interview for example, address it briefly, explain the circumstances, and then turn the conversation back to the skills and experience that makes you the best candidate for the job. Talk about what you’ve been doing during your time out of work to grow and develop professionally. Don’t show any resentment about your previous job or situation, but be enthusiastic for this job. Be confident in your abilities to do the job and your qualifications; again, what makes you the best candidate at this point.
Slide 6: As we’ve mentioned before, ageism is a common concern with experienced job seekers, and it does exist in the job market. You have to recognize this, and face it head on with a positive attitude instead of resigned resentment. Again, it is a legitimate question for companies to have their own concerns about any worker they hire and invest in, but sometimes especially with older workers. Here are some of the common concerns. It’s important to recognize these potential concerns and address them with an attitude and responses that are honest and show your determination to get the job. For example, if you know the company is comprised of mostly young people, you can prepare an answer that shows how you are able to take direction – and prove it with a specific example – and that your experiences and accumulated knowledge will help add to their team’s success. Keep these things in mind when selling yourself to a recruiter. Attitude is everything – maintain a positive, enthusiastic attitude that shows you’re focused on the future, not stuck in the past. Show you’re keeping current with technology and that you enjoy learning. Emphasize your skills – not just the ones that directly relate to the job, but also the transferable skills you’ve gotten from previous jobs and life experiences; communication, leadership and teamwork skills are always valued. Emphasize all your experiences; for example, a leadership role in a volunteer organization is valuable also. If you’re more experienced, keep a positive attitude and emphasize the qualities you have that will be valued by an employer; you have a history of dedication, commitment and maturity that a new graduate does not have. Combined with flexibility and openness to new situations, this makes you a valuable candidate, and if you believe it, you can convince prospective employers also!

Slide 7: You will experience rejection throughout your search, so have a plan to deal with it – it is ok to grieve, but don’t let it hold you back from future job search activities. To the extent that you can, get feedback that will help you become a stronger candidate. Failure has a negative connotation, but can be a key to achieving success if you change your perspective. Failure gives you the chance to analyze what’s not working and do something about it. Some factors may be outside of your control but you may be able to do something to reduce their impact or gain greater control over them. By failing and using what you’ve learned from the experience, you become more resilient and persistent. This gives you a better perspective for analyzing what needs to be done to move you towards success. Anything worth achieving takes time and effort, and if your fear of failure keeps you from trying, you will never find the impetus to move forward, and will stay in the same place you’re at now. Failure can also give you the ability to recognize when revising your goals or changing direction may be the best course of action. If you think about your past, you’ll probably be able to remember times when making a choice that wasn’t successful helped refine your approach and eventually took you towards a better outcome. It’s helpful to view failure as a learning opportunity that can help set you up for future success.

Slide 8: If you lack confidence and feel you’re not the best candidate for the position, or are feeling defeated in your job search, this will be transmitted during an interview, and will show in your marketing materials. It’s helpful to brainstorm on why you’re feeling unconfident in your search, and to address the reasons. If you really sense you’re not qualified for the jobs to which you’re applying, for example, you need to determine how to gain the qualifications, perhaps through more training. If you’re embarrassed because you got laid off, or are focusing on your past failures, make a conscious
effort to focus instead on your strengths and qualifications, backed up by past successes. Always emphasize what you have to offer – your value proposition, instead of where you may fall short, even to yourself in your self-talk. Once you have developed more positive self-talk, practice your marketing pitch, out loud, to family and friends, to increase your self-confidence. If you sound confident to yourself, you’ll convince prospective employers as well.

Slide 9: It will be hard to stay motivated all the time in your job search, especially as you face rejection. It’s helpful to create a job search plan with specific and clear goals (see our webinar on job search strategy). Also though, rely on your support system to help you stay positive. In terms of support systems, family and friends are important. It can be helpful to join a job search support group, but be sure it’s proactively focused, with tips and suggestions that keep you moving forward, rather than a group whose members constantly complain about not being able to find jobs and blames other for their situation. Keep your regular routine and life outside of the job search – eat, sleep and socialize as you normally would. Acknowledge and celebrate your successes, even small ones, as well.

Slide 10: As an introvert, I recognize the dread with which introverts can approach a job search and networking. This can lead to a sense that the whole job search process is just too overwhelming, and then giving up on all job search activity except applying to posted positions online. It’s important to recognize the amazing qualities introverts have, and that you can conduct a successful job search, including all related activities including networking, just on your own terms. For example, break the process into small steps that are manageable for you, but push yourself too. Take breaks from the search to reenergize in a way that works for you, like reading a book. Don’t limit your search to online activities, include face to face interactions, like networking events and informational interviews. Just set parameters that will make you feel more comfortable. At a networking event, for example, bring a friend for support, set a specific time limit and goals like talking to 3 people, and then give yourself permission to leave. Look at informational interviews as opportunities to build relationships, which introverts are exceptionally good at, and focus on getting to know the person, rather than just asking your business-related questions. There are many resources available to help introverts achieve success in their job search, and I’m including them on the job intensive website.

Slide 11: We’ve provided a lot of information in this intensive program. As you think about moving ahead in your job search, here are some things to consider. Determine your timeframe for your search; you may be ready now, or may use this information to prepare for a future search. Work out a detailed job search plan, incorporating the steps we’ve outlined, and what resources you will use, as well as large and small goals that will help move your job search forward. Go at your own pace though, this is your search and you have your own priorities and deadlines. Remember that we’re always here to support any aspect of your search, so feel free to follow up as needed.

Slide 12: We hope you have found this program helpful for your job search, and look forward to connecting with you in the future! As always, feel free to contact me with questions, for more detailed information, or to be connected with your advisor in our office. Wishing you the best in all your future endeavors!