

GET “CAREER INSURANCE”

The rules of employment are changing. We’ve all heard about the demise of 20-year careers with the same company. We know that the concept of “loyalty” on the part of employers or employees is no longer the dominant paradigm. The new rules are: stay ahead of the curve and be ready at any time to take advantage of market or career opportunities (This is true for companies as well as individuals!)

Whether you’re happily employed, ready take your career to the next level or currently unemployed....

Be ready to launch a job search at any time!

The news is that growing and maintaining a career now means that people need to exercise what are, for many, new behaviors.

1. **Network on an ongoing basis.** Don’t wait until you’re ready to look for a new job. Keep in touch with old colleagues, friends, customers and other clients. Pass on any information you may have about career opportunities. They may do the same for you when you are ready to look for a new position.
2. **Build an online and offline presence.** Join your professional associations if you haven’t already and participate daily or at least weekly in online discussion forums. Make new contacts, build relationships and contribute your expertise. Develop “expert status” and become known as a player in your profession or industry.
3. **Keep your resume current.** Be sure your resume has search-engine-friendly keywords specific to your profession/industry/position. Document your successes with concrete details and numbers.
4. **Cultivate relationships with executive recruiters.** Help them out with names of people you know who are “A” and “B” players and let them know about your own career aspirations. Then, set up a separate confidential email at yahoo.com or hotmail.com (not easy to trace back to your address or phone). Check this “career” email address several times a day. Fact: recruiters who don’t receive a call back within THREE HOURS on average will not bother with you. (Thanks for the stat, Peter Weddle.)
5. **Submit your confidential resume to top job boards.** Go to ITHotJobs.com and create a profile. Post a confidential version of your resume using your confidential career email address on other top sites too – flipdog.com, career-builder.com, and hotjobs.com. Also, post it on one or two specialized professional or industry-specific sites and one alumni site. Date your resume. Do NOT post your resume if you work in the highest echelons of your organization or if you are concerned that you can’t disguise your identity from your current employer.
6. **Be ready at any time to ace an employment interview conducted over the phone.** Know your personal “brand” and how you are going to communicate it. Are you ready to give two-minute summaries of 5 different accomplishments, using the C-A-R (Challenge - Actions - Results) format? Can you rattle off your greatest strengths and weaknesses? Can you clearly express your value to an organization? Do you know where to go online to research the company’s competitive market position, financials and new initiatives PRIOR to your interview?

7. **Build a career portfolio and keep it current.** This can be as basic as keeping a Word file in which you outline your past and present accomplishments in the C-A-R format. Also, create a file of employee evaluations, emails of appreciation for your work and/or internal and external newspaper/newsletter articles about you or your projects. Executives and professionals who have a personal website with an up-to-date “career presentation portfolio” have an edge.

The idea of being ready at any time to launch a full-blown job search is both a challenging and an exciting one. It puts you in the driver’s seat of your own career. Make sure your car is gassed up and ready to go on any long-planned-for or spur-of-the-moment career trip. Happy traveling!

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