

GET THE SCOOP ON...

- Developing a cast-iron stomach for rejection ■
- Troubleshooting a job search that's going nowhere ■
- Recharging a stalled search even when you think you've completely run out of fuel ■
- Going to Plan B

What to Do When Nothing Seems to Work

I've coached job seekers through two economic recessions when employment opportunities were scarce and job searches painfully long. I watched college seniors and recent graduates struggle to land jobs in the early 1990s when I was a college career counselor. More recently as an outplacement consultant, I saw seasoned professionals job hunting in the early 2000s find their searches drag on for months or even well over a year. I've also seen situations where marketplace factors are not to blame, but the candidate has made some mistakes in the search. Whatever the reason for a search being unsuccessful, there are ways to turn it around. This chapter offers proven techniques for handling the emotional aspects of a demoralizing job hunt as well as practical tips for reaching a successful conclusion.

Persisting past rejection

So, you've been job hunting for a couple of months and haven't even landed any interviews, much less a

job. Or, maybe you have bridesmaid's syndrome, always interviewing well and getting down to the short list of candidates for a position but never being the one chosen. Before you start feeling too sorry for yourself, consider this fact: Thomas Edison had to go through 10,000 experiments before he successfully invented the electric light bulb. Does that kind of put things in perspective for you? As clichéd as it is, the old saying that success doesn't come overnight really is worth keeping in mind.

Don't worry. I'm not going to suggest that all you have to do is keep your chin up and keep trying. I know how much easier that is said than done when faced with rejection after rejection. Or, you might be suffering the worse rejection of all—getting no response from any prospective employer so that you don't even have the opportunity to be rejected, much less hired. What I will offer you instead are some practical tips for dealing with the uncertainty, disappointment, and frustration that are par for the course in a job hunt.

Be realistic about timing

First, you have to realize that most job hunts take at least a few months, if not longer. Even a yearlong search is not uncommon during tough economic times or for very high level positions under any conditions. Don't give up because it seems like you've been searching for an eternity. Even well-qualified people in a strong economy can find their searches dragging on and on—so you're in good company. Try not to get hung up on statistics you might read or hear about the average length of job searches. If you've ever heard the old adage that it takes one month for every ten thousand dollars of salary you're looking for, forget you ever heard it. That just doesn't work anymore. The more you try to fit your own search into some formula, the harder it will be for you to deal with the emotional ups and downs when your search doesn't fit the mold. Each job search is unique. Some people are lucky enough to land a new job within a few weeks during a deep recession. Other well-qualified people take months and months during the best of economic times.

So, your best bet is to assume that it's going to take longer than you think it probably will and then be pleasantly surprised if and when it takes less time.

Don't take it personally

Veteran salespeople know that the quickest way to tank in their jobs is to take rejection personally. When someone doesn't return their calls or chooses not to do business with them, they must brush it off and move on to the next prospect. As a job seeker, if you're not getting your calls or email returned or not getting offers, don't assume that it's because you aren't well-qualified or deserving of a reply. It is most likely because the person you're trying to reach is extremely busy, and you are low on the totem pole of priorities. Don't take it personally.

Similarly, if you have interviewed and didn't get the offer, realize that there are often so many factors beyond your control at work. The person who did get the offer might have been an internal candidate or could have come to the employer through a close networking contact and was a virtual shoe-in from the beginning. Make sure that you have perfected your interviewing and follow-through technique as much as possible, but at some point realize that you will miss out on jobs through no fault of your own.

This approach is especially important when you're doing a lot of job searching online. I've had so many job seekers say to me, "I've applied for hundreds of jobs online and hardly any of those employers have had the courtesy to send me even an acknowledgment that they got my résumé, much less invite me



Watch Out!

Just because it's important not to take rejection personally and to realize that some factors in a job search are beyond your control, don't go so far as to feel helpless. You do still need to use proactive strategies and polish your networking and interviewing techniques to give yourself an edge.

to interview.” Well, you know what? They don’t really owe you a response. Sure, it would be nice if they would all reply to confirm that your application is in the hopper, and some employers with well-organized, candidate-friendly recruiting efforts do that. But, most of these places get thousands of applications to their advertised job openings, and some organizations get hundreds or thousands of unsolicited résumés per day or week. If they aren’t set up with a system for replying to you automatically, they just don’t have the personnel time to reply to you.

It’s also important to have a thick skin when job hunting through networking, where you have more of a personal connection with your prospective employers than through online job hunting. When a potential networking contact rejects your request to meet, or when you get your foot in the door at a company through your network but end up not landing the job, the rejection can be particularly tough to take. In the case of networking requests not working out, you need to realize that some people are just too busy to network or feel that they don’t have much to offer. Be sure that you are letting them know how they can help you and that you’re not asking for the moon. But, if even that reassurance doesn’t lead to them granting you a networking meeting, then consider that it’s not meant to be, or at least not meant to be at this time, and move on to contacting someone else.

Use positive self-talk

Did you know that you go around talking to yourself all day? No, it’s not necessarily the out-loud kind of talking to yourself—although even the most sane of us succumb to that from time to time; it’s mental self-talk. As we process the actions of people and events around us, we say things to ourselves in our heads. These self-talk messages have a major impact on our emotions—either dragging us down or lifting us up. Of course, the more negative our self-talk is, the more we are likely to feel down, demoralized, hopeless, and possibly seriously depressed.



Bright Idea

To make positive self-talk easier, think of times in the past when you've been successful and met challenges. This will help you be more optimistic about your ability to repeat that success.

Without even realizing it, you might be saying things in your mind like “I’m never going to find a job” or “I’m so nervous that I bet I’m going to blow this interview” or “Why would that busy executive be willing to talk to *me*?” It’s natural to have fears from time to time and feel down about your progress, or lack thereof, but these kinds of messages can sabotage your efforts. To help ease the emotional burden of a frustrating job search, get into the habit of listening for the messages you’re giving yourself and do your best to change them to something more positive. Those statements could change to “Finding a job is difficult, but I *will* find one.” “If I am courteous and strategic in my approach, I will probably be able to get some time with that busy executive.” “It’s normal to be a little nervous, but I am well-prepared for this interview and am going to do great.”

By changing the way you talk to yourself about the job search process, and particularly about rejection or anticipated rejection, you put yourself in a much better position to achieve success.

Troubleshooting an unsuccessful search

Although much of job hunting is out of your control—the whims of the economy, negative developments in your target industry, the luck of being in the right place at the right time—the majority of the process is within your grasp. By being strategic, you can make the macro factors work in your favor and can point yourself toward the right place at the right time. It’s important to remember this when your search is seemingly unsuccessful. Rather than feeling that everything is happening *to* you, look for what you can make happen.

The way to take that control is to go through a methodical process of troubleshooting your search. Like a mechanic examining under the hood of a car that's not running right, pick apart your search and see where the problem lies, if any. (Keeping in mind that you might be doing nothing wrong and that it is simply a matter of plugging away until you land your job.) Something as simple as a typo in your résumé or a minor flaw in your interviewing style could be lying between you and your next job. Or, you might need an attitude overhaul if you're coming across as negative or bitter about a past employment situation. Or, perhaps your search strategy could be improved; maybe you're relying too heavily on the Internet and headhunters and not doing enough networking.

Whatever the issue is, it's fixable, but first you have to know which problem to fix. Checklist BC4.1 is an easy way to go through your search point by point to identify any areas needing work. Ask yourself each question in the checklist, making sure not to rely only on your own assessment of each point but enlist outside opinions from your job search support team, particularly from any career coaches or other job search experts you have access to. The chapters referenced in parentheses after each item in the checklist direct you to the place in this book where you'll find more information on that topic. Be sure to reread the relevant chapters for areas you need to work on to get more ideas on how to solve the problems.

Checklist BC4.1. Troubleshooting an Unsuccessful Job Search

Attitude

Am I remaining positive, both in my own mental messages to myself and in the way I present myself to others? (Chs. 1, 6, 14)

Am I smiling often as I deal with people through networking, interviewing, and other encounters? (Chs. 1, 6, 14)

Do I believe that I have power in the hiring process, remembering that employers need me as much as I need them, or have I let myself be seen as a powerless, even desperate job seeker? (Chs. 1, 14)

Attitude

Am I remembering to act naturally, be myself, and use humor when appropriate instead of coming across robotically and forgetting that I'm just interacting with other human beings? (Chs. 1, 6, 16)

Is honesty my only policy? Could I have possibly stretched the truth in an interview or on my résumé and now it's coming back to haunt me? (Chs. 1, 7)

Have I remembered to show appreciation to everyone who has helped me so far in my search, or have I started to take for granted the generosity of others? (Chs. 1, 12, 18)

Are my expectations for the type of job I can land and the time frame in which I can land it realistic, or am I expecting the impossible? (Chs. 1, 2, 3)

Focus

Have I done a thorough assessment of my strengths, knowledge, and skills to know what I have to offer? (Ch. 3)

Do I know what my targeted employers are looking for so that I can market myself with the assets most relevant to them? (Chs. 2, 3)

Am I able to articulate what I want in my next career move? (Chs. 3, 4, 6)

Have I developed a collection of asset statements that showcase what I have to offer? (Ch. 4)

When I network with people, do I train them like my sales force, making it easy for them to see what my job focus is so that they can connect with others on my behalf? (Chs. 3, 6, 12)

Tools

Are all the tools of my search completely error-free? Have I had several other people review my résumé, cover letters, and other documents to spot any typos or other mistakes? (Chs. 6–9)

Are all of my written documents (résumé, letters, marketing brief, and so on) written well, using proper grammar, sentence structure, and language? Have I had others review them? (Chs. 6–9)

Is my oral communication—both the spoken and nonverbal language—effective? Have I asked other people for candid feedback on how I communicate and present myself? (Ch. 6)

(continued)

Tools

Is my résumé as effective as it could be? Have I gotten feedback on it? (Ch. 7)

Have I developed an eRésumé and tested it to make sure that it transmits well? (Ch. 13)

Have I developed a job seeker business card to ensure that people know how to reach me and to serve as a minirésumé? (Ch. 8)

What are my references saying about me? Have I coached them on how best to speak about me? Should I use an outside service or enlist a friend to check my references to make sure nothing negative is being said? (Ch. 8)

How is my email etiquette? Is my email address professional and easy to type? Am I putting in subject lines that tell the recipient something about the message and who it's from? Am I keeping my email communication concise and not sending unsolicited attachments? (Ch. 6)

Should I consider developing a portfolio as a powerful leave-behind at interviews to distinguish myself from the other candidates? (Ch. 8)

Strategy

Do I have a strategy, or am I just randomly applying for jobs? (Chs. 5, 10)

Am I utilizing a good balance of the various job search methods, making sure to spend most of my time in the methods most useful for my field? (Ch. 10)

No matter what my field, am I networking sufficiently? (Ch. 12)

Am I being creative and resourceful in my search, digging up information on potential employers and figuring out new ways to expand my network? Or, am I being too passive, just replying to job postings and relying on headhunters? (Chs. 10, 11, 12)

Is my approach like that of a consultant—assess employers' needs and show how I can meet those needs through my asset statements—or am I just stuck in the old-fashioned notion of "selling myself." (Chs. 1, 3, 4)

Do I take too many shortcuts with preparation, or am I putting enough time and effort into research, planning my approach, polishing my presentation, and practicing? (Ch. 5)

Strategy

Are my job search files, records, and logs well organized and up-to-date so that I'm not losing track of what I should be doing next and whom I should be following up with? (Ch. 5)

Could I be making mistakes in interviews—mistakes I can spot by using the Interview Evaluation Form from Chapter 15? Should I enlist a friend or career coach to help me work on my interviewing strategy and practice in mock interviews? (Chs. 13, 15)

Am I following-up with everyone I contact or meet with for networking or interviewing, or am I sitting back and waiting for them to come to me? (Chs. 9, 15)

Am I putting enough time and effort into my search overall? Am I treating my job search as my full-time job (or part-time job if still employed)? (online Bonus Chapter 1)

Recharging a stalled search

In addition to fixing any of the tactical or attitude problems that might have been identified through the troubleshooting checklist, it's also important to look for ways to breathe new life into your search on a broader scale. A job search can become very stale, as can the job seeker. A job seeker who does nothing but job hunt day in and day out makes for a boring candidate. As much as your schedule and financial situation permit, you need to take some time for yourself to do things that will relax or rejuvenate you in the mind, body, and spiritual sense.

“ I never quit until I get what I'm after. Negative results are just what I'm after. They are just as valuable to me as positive results.”

—Thomas Edison

Nutrition and exercise

You've heard it before: Be sure to eat a balanced, nutritious diet, and get enough exercise and sleep while job hunting. If you're the sort of person who already does this, great; keep it up. If

you're not, then I know you're probably rolling your eyes right now, not wanting to hear this canned advice yet again. I'm right there with you, pal. But, hey, you know why it's canned advice? Because it works. You'll have more energy, a more positive attitude, and simply look and feel better if you take care of your physical self during the stressful period of a job search. So, why not give it a try?

Fun and games

All work and no play makes Jack a dull... well, you know the rest, especially if you saw or read *The Shining*. I know I've said that job hunting needs to be treated like a full-time job, but you get a day off occasionally on a job, don't you? It's important to do the same when job searching. Give yourself the day off—or at least part of a day—from time to time to do something you would enjoy whether that's a sport, a hobby, or just spending some relaxing time with friends and family. Not only might you feel rejuvenated when you get back to your search, you will also be a more well-rounded, interesting job candidate. It's not unheard of for interviews to involve some informal conversation about what you like to do in your spare time, and some formal interview protocols even include questions about the last book you read, your favorite movie, or similar inquiries to tap into the human side of you.

When I was a career counselor in New York, I had a client who was interviewing with the president of a company to be his executive assistant. When he asked what she does with her time when not working, she replied that she sings some weekends in a Dixieland jazz band. Well, it turned out that he spends his weekends as the drummer in a Dixieland jazz band. Now, this coincidence is one of those rare ones job seekers dream about—particularly considering the candidate was a “yankee”—but even if you aren't lucky enough to come across one of these small-world coincidences, you'll at least have something interesting to talk about if you're involved in interesting pursuits. Oh, and she got the job, of course.

Is Your Age Making Your Job Search Get Old?

Although no one likes to admit to it, age discrimination is a reality in the hiring process. Employers can often save money by hiring younger workers who haven't climbed their way as high on the compensation ladder as older ones. Others have a bias against mature workers, assuming that they are set in their ways and out of touch with cutting-edge thinking or technology. You can combat these biases by touting your up-to-date knowledge and skills (or getting retraining if you really are out of touch), proving that you've been nimble and adaptable to change, and making sure your image and communication style are dynamic, energetic, and with the times. You might also give yourself the edge by seeking out organizations that value the experience and wisdom that mature workers bring. Many of these can be found through the following sites:

www.jobsforseniors.ca

www.retiredbrains.com

www.seniorhelpwanted.com

www.seniorjobbank.com

Going to Plan B

There comes a time in not every job search, but many of them, when you have to take a long, hard look at where you're trying to go and determine whether it's time to go off course. If you have done thorough troubleshooting and managed to use all the techniques for keeping your spirits up and jump-starting your stalled search, but it's still not working, then maybe it's time to go to Plan B. Don't worry if you didn't have a Plan B from the get-go. The sections that follow list typical alternate routes that job seekers commonly take. See whether any of these might be right for you.

Stop looking

This particular option applies only to those who are still currently employed and expect to stay that way for a while or who have the financial means not to have to work any time soon.

When the Best Move to Make Is No Move at All

If you do not have a pressing financial need for a new job, it might be best to hold off on a job search if other pieces of your life need to fall into place first. Human beings can handle only so much change and upheaval in their lives at any one time. William Bridges, a widely respected expert on the topic of transition identifies several categories of change in his classic book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*:

- Loss of relationships: death of a loved one; break-up of a relationship; divorce; children moving away; loss of a friend over disagreement or relocation.
- Changes in home life: getting married; having a child; changes in a spouse or companion (such as job change, retirement, or illness); new home or remodeling of an existing one; having a relative move in with you; new roommate.
- Personal changes: health; sleeping patterns; diet; appearance; lifestyle.
- Financial changes: decrease in income; a loan or mortgage in progress; failed investments; new financial obligations; new budget.

These sources of transition can have a profound impact on your life and mental state. If you are undergoing any of these, it might be wise to hold off on your job search until you've worked through these transitions (assuming, again, that you are financially able to do so).

When your job search isn't working out, the best decision might be to stop looking and restart the search when marketplace conditions are more favorable or when you have more time to devote to the search. The break might also give you a chance to go off and make yourself a more promising candidate. Perhaps you could take a course or two that would enhance your skill set. Maybe you could get more involved in a professional association through a leadership role and, thus, gain the visibility that causes job opportunities to land in your lap. However you use the time, the break might serve you well and enable you to revisit the search at a future date when you feel ready to try again.

You might even want to formalize the break by going on a sabbatical—an official time out from your daily job responsibilities to study, travel, and relax. Traditionally available only to academics and clergy; sabbaticals can sometimes be arranged in the business world as paid or unpaid leaves of absence sanctioned by the employer above and beyond the basic time off like vacation and personal days or maternity leaves. According to Vault.com, nearly half of *Fortune* magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work for in America offer sabbaticals or similar leave programs ranging from a few weeks to six months or longer. You can also learn about sabbatical options, including how to sell your employer on the idea if a formal program is not already established, in the book *Time Off from Work: Using Sabbaticals to Enhance Your Life While Keeping Your Career on Track* by Lisa Rogak.

Seek an interim job

If a particular type of job you want simply doesn't seem attainable for whatever reason, consider seeking out a different type of job that might be easier to get. You don't have to look at this as a major, permanent career change but as an interim step that buys you some time while you continue to look for a longer-term job. For some, this means giving themselves a demotion. A sales manager who can't find work, for example, could go back to being a sales rep—a job that tends to be more plentiful and

more easily obtained. For others, this means doing what might be thought of as a “day job”—the sort of job that’s fairly quick and easy to get by walking into an establishment and filling out an application, such as sales associate in a retail business or serving in a restaurant. Others turn to fields like teaching where shortages of teachers in some geographic locations mean that you can quickly become certified and find work. The income that some of these interim jobs would bring might not be enough for you to live on if you’ve been in a higher income bracket and have a higher cost of living, but if feasible, do consider these shifts in direction as a good Plan B option.

Do temporary or contract work

If you read the Introduction, you learned that there is a growing pool of free agents in this country—temporary employees, freelancers, contractors, independent consultants, and microbusiness owners—and that employers are increasingly turning to free agents as a cost-effective way to have a skilled workforce at their beck and call. If your job search is going nowhere and you’ve tried to avoid temp work so that you have all your time free to look for a job, it might be time to reconsider taking some temporary assignments. Not only does this bring in some money, it also gets you feeling productive again, can expand your networking opportunities, and gives you something current to talk about in interviews and maybe even to add to your résumé if the work is relevant to your job target.

Temporary and contract work can be found through any of the major staffing agencies that advertise heavily in newspaper



Bright Idea

If you’ve been out of work for a considerable period of time, find a friend or acquaintance with some sort of business you can help out in, whether related to your target job or not. Even if they can’t pay you, you’ll get some recent achievements under your belt and can show employers that you’re staying busy.

classified sections and online. Adecco, Aquent, Kelly Services, Manpower, Randstad, Robert Half, and Olsten are just some of the names you're likely to come across when looking for a staffing firm through which to work. You'll also find temporary work through sites like the following:

- www.net-temps.com
- www.sologig.com
- www.freeagent.com
- www.contractengineering.com
- www.freelancers.com
- www.thepeoplebank.com (Canada)

Go back to school

Don't assume that going back to school is an automatic ticket to a job, but if in the course of your job search, you've realized that lack of a degree or particular skills is keeping you out of the running for most of the jobs you want, then the ivory tower may be just where you need to head. Enhancing your educational credentials can be a great way to jump-start your job search, but do be careful about selecting a program that is most likely to make a difference and be worth the time and money investment. Your choices usually stack up into the following options, listed from what are typically the most expensive, time-consuming options down to the least involved ones.

Degree programs

Depending on what degree you already hold, if any, you might benefit from going on for the next degree, whether that's an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctorate. These are offered by colleges and universities, through both on-site and online programs or programs that combine the two methods. Just be sure to choose one that is accredited by a reputable organization and that your research indicates will make a big difference in your marketability. An excellent site for identifying distance-learning

programs (that is, primarily Internet-based) that weeds out the bogus accrediting bodies is www.geteducated.com.

Professional certificate programs

In many occupations and industries there are certification programs available to you that can be very beneficial for enhancing your marketable skills. These are offered through the continuing education or professional division of colleges and universities as well as through some independent training institutes and professional or trade associations. Program lengths vary widely but typically take several weeks if not several months to a couple of years to complete. The best way to find these is to check the Web site for your field's professional association (see the online Bonus Appendix 3) and to find out which colleges and universities near you have a continuing education or professional studies division.

Professional licensing

In some fields, you might need to earn a license or other professional designation before you can jump to the next rung on the career ladder. Examples of this include the Series 7 license for investment and securities professionals, CPA for accountants, Chartered Financial Analyst, and other licenses for mortgage brokers, actuaries, real estate agents, and many other fields. The licensing process varies from field to field but usually involves taking a specified number of courses and passing an exam or series of exams. Time frames range from a matter of weeks to months or years, and cost varies widely. Note that some licensing bodies require that you be sponsored by an employer while undergoing the licensing process, so this might not be an option for unemployed job seekers.

Skills training programs

Many programs out there help you acquire specific skills that will improve your marketability but don't offer a formal certification or degree upon completion (although some give a piece

Academic Interviews

If you decide to return to college or university to pursue a degree, you might have an interview as part of the application process, particularly for graduate and professional degrees. Most of the interviewing strategies in this book work for academic interviews, but the twist is that instead of tailoring your asset statements and communication style to fit a prospective employer's needs and culture, you are doing so for a degree program. You will be judged on what you can contribute to the life at that institution, as well as to the profession you enter after completing the program. If given the option to interview as part of the application process, always try to do so. Strategies for academic interviews include

- Make sure you're clear on how the degree fits your long-term career goals.
- Don't assume that any students you meet have little or no say in the admissions decisions. Put yourself in subtle self-marketing mode with everyone you meet.
- Try to cultivate contacts with alumni of the program.
- Learn about the culture of the program (for example, some MBA programs are more entrepreneurial; some have an international flavor; some IT programs are more engineering oriented, and so on) and show how you fit.

of paper confirming completion of the program that serves as an informal certification). You usually have the option of taking individual courses based on the skills you need to beef up on or to take a complete program that includes a few to several courses. Each course might last anywhere from a day to several weeks. These sorts of programs are most common in technical



Moneysaver

Some government funding is available for retraining and education, particularly for laid-off workers. Contact your local Department of Labor (DOL) office and also make yourself better informed by reading the Employment & Training Administration section of the DOL's site, www.doleta.gov.

skills areas, particularly computer skills, and are usually offered through private training institutes that advertise in the media and through professional and trade associations. Just be wary of any that seem to make promises that would be hard to keep, such as guaranteeing job placement.

Consider relocation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 40 million Americans move every year. Should you be one of them? If you think job opportunities might be better somewhere else, relocation could make sense. Expanding your job search beyond your local area can be an excellent way to introduce some new life into your search. You expand your pool of opportunities immensely and might speed up your search. Relocation can also give you the chance to change your lifestyle for the better or experience a part of the country (or world) that appeals to you. Or, if you know you would prefer the quality of life in another part of the country (or the world), it could be time to pack up. But, if you're planning to move just because you've heard that jobs are more plentiful in a certain place, be very careful and do your homework thoroughly before pulling up stakes.

Where to go

To make a good decision about relocating, conduct research to determine where the best job opportunities are for your line of work and also identify areas that fit with what's important to you in your overall way of life. Researching cities and towns is no problem—data abound on everything from average rainfall to best school systems to which libraries have the most books. And,

Locating Relocation Advice

The sites that follow are excellent sources of advice on relocation, including: data and tips for choosing the best location; salary and cost of living calculators; and resources and tips for the logistics of moving. Most of the major real estate companies feature relocation advice and geographic data on their sites, as well, but the sites listed here are for the most part independent of any realty firm.

About: Job Searching: Relocation Resources

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/relocating>

Best Places to Live in America

<http://www.Money.com>

BR Anchor.com and Relocation Today newsletter

<http://www.branchor.com>

DirectMoving.com

<http://www.directmoving.com>

Find Your Spot

<http://www.findyourspot.com>

Location Guides

<http://www.locationguides.com>

MSN House & Home: Moving and Relocation

<http://homeadvisor.msn.com/move/overview>

Monstermoving

<http://www.monstermoving.com>

Realtor.com: Moving

<http://www.homefair.com>

Relocate America

<http://www.relocate-america.com>

Salary Expert

<http://www.salaryexpert.com>

Sperling's Best Places

<http://www.bestplaces.net>

Town Hunter

<http://www.townhunter.com>

of course, which cities offer the best employment opportunities. To know what you're getting into, read everything you can about the areas you're considering. *Places Rated Almanac*, a book available in bookstores and libraries, is an indispensable source of data on metropolitan areas in North America. It rates hundreds of cities on factors including weather, cultural activities, crime rates, and more. The book gives a summary ranking of cities, so you can see the top places to live at a glance. You'll also find annual best-places rankings in *Money* and *Fortune* magazines. Also be sure to check out the sites listed in the "Locating Relocation Advice" sidebar to start your research.

How to decide

Unless you are so in need of any job that you will move wherever the job is, you will want to make sure that the places you consider moving will be a good fit for you and your family, if applicable. As you evaluate various relocation options, take note of the following factors in Checklist BC4.2, making sure that you know how important each factor is to you, if at all, and then seeing how the various locations stack up.

Checklist BC4.2. Relocation Factors to Consider

Air quality

Climate

Colleges and universities

Cost of living (including local and state taxes, housing, and utilities)

Crime rate

Culture

Economic stability/projected growth

Employment opportunities

Healthcare availability and quality

Population demographics

Public and private schools

Public transportation

Recreational opportunities

Roads and highways (for example, amount of traffic or average commute times)

Water quality

Conducting a long-distance job search

If you decide to open up your search to other locations, keep in mind that relocation requires not just a mindset change but a job search strategy change as well. Although most of the job search methods advocated throughout this book work for both a local and long-distance search, you should keep a few pointers in mind to ensure a successful long-distance job hunt.

Find a local address (local as in the city or town where you're trying to find work) and put it on your résumé and all correspondence. Try to use a friend or family member's address. Or, keep it simple and use only your phone number and email address in your job hunt. (You don't have to worry as much about your phone number not being local because with mobile phones the area codes are sometimes different from the local ones.)

If you can't hide the fact that you're not local to the targeted area, then be sure to state in all cover letters or introductory email that you will be in that area during a specific time period and available for interviews. Make good use of Internet job resources to identify openings in your targeted area(s).

Develop networking relationships in the new area by using online networking groups and alumni of any of your educational institutions. Don't just ask them for local job leads but find out what the best local job hunting resources are, such as newspapers and local or regional networking groups.

Contact the local chapter of your professional associations to get in touch with people in that area who might give you some time on the phone to tell you about the local employment scene in your field.

If you were given outplacement services by your last employer and the outplacement organization is large enough to have offices in other locations, ask whether you can speak with a consultant or local labor market expert by phone or in person in the other offices to get a read on the employment climate in that area.

Make any necessary adjustments to your image, including how you dress and the pace of your speech to better fit the local style.

Avoid haphazard searches where you fling a few résumés out to different cities and hope one sticks. Unless your skill set is highly in demand and scarce among local candidates, most employers won't bother to take you seriously unless you show a serious commitment to moving to their city or town.

Finally, be aware that although a long-distance job hunt can inject new life into your search because it expands your options, it also introduces a whole new dimension of effort and time required. It can get expensive as well, because you might have to foot the bill for any trips to the new area unless an employer can't find any local candidates as well-qualified and will fly you in for interviews.

Become an entrepreneur

Plenty of job seekers get fed up with trying to convince employers of their talents and decide that they want to put those talents to work in their own business. This is especially true of those who have experienced one too many lay-offs and want to take their career destinies into their own hands and not be at the mercy of another employer. Whether these are your motivations or you simply have an entrepreneurial, independent streak, business ownership might be the right Plan B for you.

You certainly wouldn't be alone in doing so. According to the Office of Advocacy within the U.S. Small Business Administration, there are more than 23 million small businesses in the United States, about 17 million of which are sole proprietorships with

no employees. Small businesses have been one of the fastest growing sectors of the American market for a number of years, with the majority of new jobs being created by small businesses. If you want to consider the entrepreneurship route, you have four basic options:

1. Start a business.
2. Buy a business.
3. Purchase a franchise.
4. Become a free agent.

The first and fourth options are closely related in that you start something of your own rather than buying into a business that's already established. The difference is that as a free agent *you* are the business. You market your knowledge, skills, and talent as a consultant or freelancer. With starting a business, you develop a company that produces a product or offers a service. You might choose to keep it small with no employees or very few, in which case the line between business owner and free agent is blurred. Or, you may grow it into a multi-million or billion dollar significant force in the marketplace.

Buying a business is a good route for those who don't necessarily have a burning idea for a business they want to create but like the idea of running a business and so are willing to take over a business that has grown out of someone else's creative spark. This is also a good option for those who want to take on a little less risk as you know more of what you're getting into when you buy a business that's already established. Even if the business isn't doing well and you'll have to turn it around, at least you know what you're getting into. Some businesses are advertised for sale by their owners, or you might hear of them through word of mouth. To be more thorough and to have an advisor through the process, you might want to enlist the help of a business broker. The IBBA, International Business Brokers Association at www.ibba.org, is a reliable source of referrals to a business broker.

A related option is to buy into a franchise business. With a franchise, you have the benefit of having the business idea already established for you from basic concept to branding, sales strategy, and marketing and advertising models, as well as varying degrees of support from the parent company. The risk with a franchise is often lower than that of a stand-alone business because the brand is established and a customer base is somewhat ready-made. Franchise options are much more diverse than the fast food and transmission businesses that might spring to mind when you think franchise. There are hundreds of types of businesses available, including some with business-to-business models rather than consumer orientations. The franchise resources listed in the “Entrepreneurs and free agents” section of online Bonus Appendix 1 can help you learn more.

Whichever entrepreneurial route you choose, be realistic about your odds of success and your ability to fund the business as well as to put food on your own table while you wait for the business to take off. The odds of success are actually not as dismal as the hearsay that you are likely to come across. (You’ll probably have someone tell you that some huge percentage of businesses fail in the first year.) The actual facts, according to recent surveys by the U.S. Small Business Administration, are that two-thirds of new firms survive at least two years and about half survive at least four years. Not bad odds, but be careful nonetheless. The resources provided in the “Entrepreneurs and free agents” section of the online Bonus Appendix 1 can help you weigh the pros and cons of taking the entrepreneurship route and inform you about how to improve your chances of success.

Just the facts

- Don’t take rejection personally, and use positive self-talk to help you brush it off and regain your optimism.
- If your search is going nowhere, use a methodical troubleshooting method to ensure that your attitude, focus, tools, and strategy are up to par.

- Give yourself permission to bring balance into your life through relaxation, recreation, or any sort of time off as a way to rejuvenate yourself during an arduous job search.
- Realize that there's nothing wrong with deciding to throw in the towel and go to Plan B when the job you're seeking just doesn't look like it's going to materialize.

