

# THE SIX BIGGEST JOB SEARCH **FRUSTRATIONS** AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM



BY DON HUSE

The Six Biggest Job Search Frustrations and How to Overcome Them  
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## **A Job Search Can Be Frustrating**

Maybe you're the exception. You're still employed, but you've decided it's time to be proactive and make a move. You have noticed some disturbing trends, some dark clouds on the horizon, and you don't want to get caught flat-footed. Or maybe you're just unhappy and have decided it's time to do something about it.

More likely, you are not jumping. You have been pushed. You knew there was a little upheaval at work, but you believed your contribution was too valuable to become a casualty. You thought you could win over that new boss in spite of the signs to the contrary. You thought you could ride out this period of organizational transition. After all, you've been with the organization for years. Doesn't that count for something?

Either way, you now find yourself looking for a new opportunity. You didn't think it would be this challenging. You've done some great things in your career. Shouldn't there be more demand for someone of your abilities? What is going on?

This book is designed to give you a better understanding of what is happening and point you in a more productive direction.

Read the chapters in the order that suits you. Start with your biggest frustration.

# 1

## **“If I Could Just Talk to the Right Person” Frustrations with Interviews (or the Lack Thereof)**

Richard’s eyes lit up when he saw the job posting. He couldn’t help but smile. He was perfect for the job. He just knew it. Once he completed the online application, he was sure it would only be a short time before he received a call for an interview. He was shocked when in just a few days he received an email indicating he did not meet their qualifications. “How could this happen?” he thought.

Nancy hung up after her phone interview discouraged that she did not feel she had personally connected with the interviewer. She felt like she was struggling to convey her value over the phone. She was sure she would have been more effective in person.

Ruben had been very excited about the opportunity for which he was interviewing, and the enthusiasm people within the organization had shown toward him. When he found out later that he had come in second, being that close made the disappointment that much greater.

Most job seekers experience a combination of stress and discouragement when it comes to interviews, or the lack thereof. Here are some of the most common challenges:

## **Not Getting the Interview**

Most people have been there, scanning job boards and company websites for that "right" position. And there it is. It seems like it was written just for you. The correlation between the requirements and your experience and abilities is startling. You eagerly prepare your application or resume for submission.

*And then you wait... and wait... and wait.*

"What is wrong with these people?!" you think to yourself. "Can't they see it? I'm perfect for this job."

*In all likelihood, by the time you saw the job posting, a strong candidate was already in play. Someone had an inside track on that position.*

The company may have been posting the job as a formality. Even if they did not have someone in mind from the beginning, word of mouth has spread. Current employees have been telling their friends and acquaintances about the developing opportunity, and someone has already emerged as a strong candidate. The odds of a sterile resume or application beating them out is unlikely at this point.

And then there is the fact that even if no leading candidate has yet emerged, you are now likely one of hundreds of applicants, many of whom saw the posting with the same initial optimism you had.

At this point, many people think they need to get more education or certifications to make their resume better. Improving your resume by adding credentials is not a bad idea, but it will likely have a modest effect. The odds work against you when you are one of the masses.

Your best bet is to have a strategy to develop new targeted contacts, which will not only help you in your current search, but will also benefit you in the future.

## **Phone Interviews**

I once heard someone say that having a phone interview is like trying to run a sprint with snow skis on; it is difficult to be effective. Many people feel that the interviewer doesn't really get to know you. It has an impersonal feel to it.

To overcome this, you can do a couple of things in addition to your standard interview preparation.

First, smile. When you smile, it brings a warmth and friendliness to your voice that the interviewer will sense.

*Also, stand and use hand gestures. Obviously, the interviewer can't see you, but standing and using hand gestures will animate your voice and give it energy.*

This can make a significant difference in how the interviewer thinks of and remembers you.

Interviews in Skype or Google Hangouts enable you to see the person, but it is still not the same as being face-to-face. Sometimes, there can be a slight delay, which can be both annoying and unnerving. Again, when using these apps, be sure to smile, and consider practicing with Skype, Google Hangouts, or FaceTime so that you become more relaxed and comfortable using the technology.

## **Interviewer Competence**

Job seekers frequently tell me they experience interviews in which they feel the interviewer lacks sufficient expertise for evaluating their talent. This is more likely in an initial interview when the task seems more about screening than selecting the right candidate.

*A recruiter may be charged with looking for specifics (education, certifications, industry experience, etc.) and simply lack the knowledge and perspective for what a particular candidate has to offer.*

Sometimes, an interviewer may just be having a bad day. They may be tired because they have talked with a lot of candidates. Other responsibilities may be distracting them. Nonetheless, it is



important not to become frustrated, but to communicate warmth and professionalism. These are the things you can control.

## **No Feedback**

When you don't get an interview, don't make it to the next round of interviews, or don't get the job, you want to know why. It's natural; you want to understand what you can work on or improve to give yourself a better chance next time. In the vast majority of cases, you will not get any feedback.

First, the interviewer is not going to risk saying the wrong thing and create a potential hiring incident.

Second, they don't want to let you down or hurt your feelings, so they avoid talking with you.

Occasionally, you may hear that you are “overqualified.” In some instances, this may be true. In most cases, it is a bit of a backhanded compliment designed to appease you.

If you want to know how you are coming across, get a set of typical interview questions (largely behavioral/performance-based) and find someone you know that is a recruiter or has experience as a hiring manager and role-play the interview with them. Ask for ruthless feedback.

## **Always a Bridesmaid**

Coming in second, that's tough. Of course, you got further than most, but that is little consolation. You didn't get the job, period.

If you find yourself coming in second, it may be time to consider taking things up a notch. Increasing your effectiveness in communicating your value proposition and better distinguishing yourself from your competition may involve nuances and subtleties that you are unaccustomed to dealing with.

Since you are rarely addressing these issues, it may be time to find a coach that works with people on these things all the time. Be sure to find one with a reputation for personal marketing and branding.

## **The bottom line:**

1. **Understand what is really happening.** The job market is not as much about "openings" as it appears. It is more about opportunities that tend to develop more informally. Work on becoming the informal candidate. When someone meets you and begins to see how you can help their organization, you will notice that moment when things turn more formal and you will be the one with the advantage.

2. **Be clear about your message.** Know what you want to communicate. Don't expect an interviewer to figure it out. Be prepared to get your message across even if you are not asked the right questions. Don't go into an interview without knowing something about the organization's objectives or problems and how you can make a contribution.
3. **Don't get frustrated.** If you do, don't let it show.
4. **Communicate warmth, professionalism, and energy.** Strength and likability are attractive qualities.

# 2

## **“My Network Is Insufficient” Frustrations with Not Having Enough Contacts**

Whether you are watching your preferred morning news and talk television show, searching the internet, or talking with a career expert, if the topic is job search, the advice will be the same. You already know it. You have heard it many times.

*The best way to find a job, especially a more desirable one, is through networking.*

This gives you an uneasy feeling because you know your network is not very strong. Like most people, you have been concerned about the quality of your work and performing well for your employer; you were not thinking about building a network.

## **Networking Challenges**

**Most people's existing network is inadequate to significantly assist them in their job search.**

For most of us, our existing network is made up of people we have worked with in the past, people we attend church or other groups with, and people in our neighborhood.

*If you are like most people, your network has not been strategically thought out and cultivated.*

**There is likely a diminishing return on your network over time.** When you start your career, almost everyone you know is at your level or above. As your career grows, fewer of the people you know are at a sufficient level of influence to assist you in getting into an organization.

*In fact, as you grow in compensation and responsibility, the number of opportunities at each successive level typically decreases.*

Moreover, you may have lost track of some of the people you have known through the years because they have either moved away or changed industries altogether.

**Networking events are often uncomfortable and time-consuming.** Many feel “pressing the flesh” at professional association meetings and networking mixers seems inauthentic. If it is the 11th hour and you really need a job, the odds of meeting someone in such gatherings that will quickly lead to an opportunity are not high. This really should be part of a longer-term, overall strategy in which you are developing contacts for potential future mutual benefit. However, there is no time like the present to get started.

**Most networking attempts are too anemic and circuitous.** Sending an email blast to people you know to tell them you are now looking for a job is not networking. Having lunch with an old co-worker or college classmate and letting them know you are “on the market” is not networking. Hoping you know someone who knows someone who knows of an opportunity is a long shot.

*Networking is about the new contacts you are developing that may be in a place to be of help.*

## **Natalie’s Story<sup>1</sup>**

Natalie was in the midst of the most significant career transition of her life. After consulting with her career coach on industries of interest, she read an industry article about recent trends and events. She identified two companies that she was particularly interested in exploring.

With the assistance of her coach, she researched the companies and identified key decision-makers and contact information.

*Natalie’s coach helped Natalie craft an email designed to initiate an informal dialog.*

Natalie then emailed the two decision-makers asking for a brief meeting to get their advice and insight. Within two days, both responded and agreed to meet with her.

The meeting with the first decision-maker resulted in positive feedback, industry insight, and referrals to other industry decision-makers.

The meeting with the second decision-maker, Mr. Dennison, was extremely positive. By the time Natalie got home, he had emailed her three separate times indicating the steps he was taking to see if he could uncover an opportunity for her in his organization.

She received a follow-up call the same day in which he revealed, “I want to hire you, and if I can’t work that out, I will do what I can to help you find another opportunity in our industry.”

Natalie received an offer from Mr. Dennison’s organization. It was one of three offers she received before making a decision.

## **Turbocharge Your Networking**

Neither Natalie nor her coach knew Mr. Dennison previously. But she was able to cultivate an informal dialogue that allowed him to discover her.

Here are four questions to help focus your networking:

- 1. What are the companies and/or industry spaces that interest me?**

2. **Who are the influential people in those spaces?** Depending on your professional level, you will probably be looking for someone at a director level or above. If you're starting your career, you may be looking for someone at a managerial level. It will help if these are people who care about the kind of work that you do or the difference you can make in an organization.
3. **What is my personal brand and value proposition?** Your brand is your message to the marketplace at-large concerning the kind of results you can deliver. Your value proposition is more directly focused on how you can help an organization achieve its objectives within a specific context. Have a story to tell, with specifics about the kind of difference you have been able to make.
4. **What is going to be an effective approach to start an informal conversation?** This is where most people tend to feel a little clueless. Too often, we betray ourselves by looking like a needy job seeker. Like Natalie, all you want is an informal dialogue and information. Rather than you pressing them for a job, let them discover you.

## **Tools and Tactics**

- **Join LinkedIn groups that touch on your target industry spaces.** Groups give you increased access to people who are not directly in your network but belong to the group.
- **Follow companies of interest on LinkedIn.** Doing so may give you some insight into company activity and possible information on key employees.



- **Consider a subscription to your local business journal.** This is an excellent source of market information and can help you identify key decision-makers.
- **Use Google Alerts to keep up with companies and industries.** For example, you could set up an alert for “Biotech San Antonio” and receive new information daily via email.

Natalie’s existing network was not sufficient for her career transition objectives.

However, she was able to successfully develop the new contacts she needed.

Think of this targeted contact development approach not just as an effective job search strategy in the short term, but also as a means to cultivate a far more substantial network for your future.

# 3

## **“How Do I Answer the Income Question?” Frustrations with Discussing Compensation**

**Scenario 1:** You've heard about a job posting from a friend, and you go to the company's website. Sure enough, there it is. As you read the posting, you know you're a perfect fit. You begin the application and are cruising through when all of a sudden, there it is—the income box. Your situation is not that simple. Your income has varied. You've chosen opportunities for their potential that didn't pan out, or you were in a position where you were earning far more than you would normally expect to. "Surely, there's a place to put my explanation," you think to yourself. You nervously look for it, but there is none, just the income box with a little asterisk indicating it is required.

**Scenario 2:** You have successfully made contact with a decision-maker in a company in which you are very interested. You have arranged an informal meeting over a cup of coffee. The meeting goes better than you could've hoped. You have synergy and chemistry with this decision-maker, and the conversation turns toward possibilities. You are aware that you have crossed a threshold and this is now a serious conversation about a possible opportunity. And then it comes. "What are your salary

requirements?" he asks. Wait, this is just an informal meeting over coffee! It's too soon to be talking about money! You have this horrible deer-in-the-headlights feeling.

For most job seekers, questions about income are among the most challenging and frustrating. The reason is that, for most of us, our career has not followed a neat and tidy pattern of progression, and our income history reflects this. It's also because our value proposition is unique to each organization and situation. We bring more value to one organization than to another.

## **Concerns**

As you approach the income question, there are natural concerns.

- You don't want to leave money on the table.
- You don't want to price yourself out of the market.
- You don't want to become the bargain employee.

People often think, "I'll go in low and once I prove myself, I'll work my way up to an appropriate salary." While there are exceptions, this is often a mistake. Why? Because people love their bargains. We all like being on the right side of a good deal. I dare say you have never purchased something at a bargain price, loved it so much that you went back and paid the difference to the full price. People

love their bargains and employers are no different. Worst of all, when you're the bargain employee, you may have given up more than just money. You may have given up a little respect.

## **The Money Matters**

You may think of your compensation primarily in terms of what you want to provide for your family and your personal goals.

In the marketplace, it is tied to other things. First and foremost, it is linked to your value to the organization. You may be tempted to think that you have static market value, but this is not the case.

*The degree to which an organization needs the things that you can bring to it with your value proposition will determine, in large measure, what they are willing to pay you.*

As you manage your career, one of the questions you want to continually ask yourself is, "To which organizations can I be most valuable?" This will significantly impact your job satisfaction. If an organization highly values you, that will typically lead to more respect and more autonomy. Conversely, if you're underpaid, you're likely undervalued and receiving less respect and less independence.

## **Tactics**

If you're filling out an online application, it can be difficult to avoid the income question. "Negotiable" or "glad to discuss in interview" may successfully dodge the question; however, some may frown upon these sorts of answers and exclude you. The safest way to handle this (if you prefer to be safe) is to do your homework, research the range for the position, and enter a number that is not too expensive and not too cheap but is reflective of a strong candidate. This reveals yet another disadvantage to online applications and why a targeted contact development strategy that leads to more informal dialogue with decision-makers is much more effective.

If you are talking with a decision-maker, here are three proven techniques for deferring the compensation question:

“Discussing salary is always challenging for me until I feel like I fully understand the requirements of the position and the challenges of the organization. Could we talk more about that?”

“I'm sure you have something budgeted for this position. What is the range you had in mind?”

“I'm sure if we both believe I'm the right person for the job, we will be able to agree on something that works for both of us. Can we discuss more about the nature and scope of the position?”

In most cases, because your response is reasonable, the conversation will move on. On rare occasions, you may have an interviewer who will get stubborn and not let go without a number. At this point, you need to know your *desired* number, your *acceptable* number, and your *not worth it*

number. Then you want to respond with something like, “I’d like to be around (desired number) but would consider (acceptable number) depending on the situation.”

## **Buy Time to Build Value**

While some people think it's best to get the salary question out of the way and not waste anyone's time, I typically disagree.

You want time to build the perception of your value to the organization. You want them to see how you can help them achieve their objectives and solve their problems.

*The greater their understanding of your value, the more they will be willing to pay you.*

Income questions can be challenging, and like most job search challenges, they are most difficult when you are merely one of many applicants. This is why you want to engage in a systematic strategy to cultivate informal dialogue with decision-makers wherever possible. When this happens, income questions become more easily connected to your value proposition to the organization. This is the kind of income conversation you really want to have.

# 4

## **“I Don’t Know How to Use LinkedIn Effectively” Frustrations with Online Personal Branding**

Some people have avoided social media, but for the rest of us, it has touched many aspects of our lives, from connecting with old friends, keeping up with children or grandchildren, to managing our careers.

Sometime since LinkedIn was launched in May of 2003, you received that first invitation to connect. Or maybe someone asked, “Are you on LinkedIn?” If you’re like most people, since then you have been adding an occasional connection here and there, but that’s about it.

Then, something happens: you find yourself searching for a job. There you are on LinkedIn with few strategic connections and an unimpressive profile. Now what?

In the world of career management, in particular, LinkedIn has become a force. While most people have a LinkedIn profile, the social media site remains largely underutilized and misunderstood.

The following are typical of what I hear from people trying to utilize LinkedIn:

“I don’t know how to use LinkedIn effectively.”

“LinkedIn has too many options. I don’t know which ones are important.”

“I don’t have enough contacts.”

“My contacts are all in an industry in which I no longer wish to work.”

“My contacts are all where I used to live, not where I live now.”

Let’s start with some basics that will help you use LinkedIn more effectively.

## **Four Primary Uses of LinkedIn**

### ***A Place to be Found***

Many people hope that by having a LinkedIn profile, someone will find them online and offer them a job.

While recruiters are increasingly using LinkedIn to find candidates, you are much more likely to obtain your new job informally. Recruiters looking at your LinkedIn profile are looking for the same



thing they look for on your resume: a pedigree for the job they are seeking to fill. So, if you have excellent work history for the kind of opportunity you are pursuing, and it has all the right keywords and certifications, it is *possible* that someone may see your profile and contact you about a job.

But, just like the old resume game, if your job history is less than ideal or you're trying to change industries, this will be very unlikely. The truth is most people don't have the career pedigree, no matter how talented they may be, to hope that passively being found on LinkedIn will be a useful strategy.

## ***Building a Network***

Assuming you have started by connecting with the people you know, the next step is to find out which of these connections might be helpful to you. These would be your *second-level connections*.

If you look up a particular company on LinkedIn and you find there are second-level connections there, you can use the fact that you have a mutual acquaintance to start a conversation.

Maybe your second-level contact works in an industry in which you are interested. Again, because you have a shared acquaintance, a conversation with this individual to uncover industry knowledge can be very beneficial.

*As you can see, I'm talking about leveraging LinkedIn to start conversations with people, rather than just adding sterile, meaningless Internet "contacts."*

## **Research**

By following a company on LinkedIn, you will not only gain insight into what is going on with the organization, but you can also see who is coming and going (this will be especially true for larger companies). For example, if there is a new director in a particular department, there may well be changes coming. It may be a good time to approach someone in that department, especially if you feel you have a value proposition relevant to departmental needs.

*Don't wait for a job to be posted—be proactive and approach it less formally.*

## **Personal Branding**

This is by far the most powerful use of LinkedIn. Let's start with three key opportunities in your LinkedIn profile.

**First, take advantage of the profile headline.** This should be more than your current job title and company you work for (that information will be in your job history anyway). If your title and company are impressive, it is okay to include it; however, there is an opportunity here to make a more significant statement about your professional brand.

Which makes a more powerful statement?

Vice-President of Internet Marketing, XYZ, Inc.

or

Online Marketing Officer. Expert in SEO, Social Media, Email Marketing, PPC, and Mobile Advertising

*The latter speaks more to the difference you can make and therefore comes across stronger.*

**Second, make the most of the summary.** Here, you have a tremendous opportunity to send a clear and compelling professional branding message. It's critical that you don't start composing your summary without considering who it is you're trying to reach. Who is your target audience, those for whom you have a value proposition? What do you want them to know about you?

With your target audience in mind, start a very rough draft of things you may want to use. Make it your personal brainstorming session.

Include short statements of quantifiable achievements, things you love, and things that are important to you.

What are the things that make you stand out, that differentiate you from others who do the same kind of work? Be specific and give brief examples.

Also, include things that make you interesting. Do you have unique awards, mountains climbed, languages learned, other hobbies?

*Remember, this will continue to be a work in progress, not a once-and-for-all final product.*

You will be tweaking and making changes to your LinkedIn summary as you learn more about yourself and discover better ways to communicate your brand.

As you look through your draft material with your target audience in mind, you want to start your summary with something that will give it a little "pop." Make those first two lines cause them to want to read more.

While it is not a hard-and-fast rule, I encourage you to consider writing it in the first person. It will come across warmer and more personable. It is, after all, a social medium.

Once you have composed your summary, test it. Share it with a handful of people—peers, friends, a coach. Be sure they are people who understand your work and your value proposition. Use their insights to edit your summary. Now, you're ready to post it in your profile.

Creating an excellent background summary is an art, and you may want to get some help. You need the summary to be strong, but you don't want to sound like a braggart.

The challenge for most job seekers is that they lack the objectivity to see they are coming across too eager or too needy and this diminishes the perception of their value.

**The third opportunity is the Skills & Endorsements section.** Here, you want to enter your motivated skills (i.e., the things you do best and enjoy most). This is not a catchall. Resist the temptation list everything you have ever done, especially the stuff you don't particularly enjoy. Otherwise, it will come across a little desperate.

There is so much that can be done with LinkedIn that it can seem overwhelming. But if you start with the idea that 1) it is a powerful personal branding tool, and 2) it is a means to initiate conversations and meetings with people in the companies and industries in which you are interested, you'll be far better off than just adding sterile "contacts."

# 5

## **“I Feel Like I’m Wasting My Time” Frustrations with Being Unproductive**

It’s with good reason we’ve all heard that finding a job is a full-time job. But job seekers struggle with making meaningful use of their time. It's one thing to invest the time; it is quite another to feel like you're productive.

Here are six of the biggest time wasters you’ll need to overcome.

### **The Application Black Hole**

Online job applications are often long and tedious. They give you a false sense of productivity—that feeling that you are "doing" something about your job search. But deep down, you know they are relatively passive, extremely ineffective, and leave you with only a sliver of hope that anything will come of it.

As Chris Guillebeau observes:

... the application process, ... has experienced a serious case of application inflation in recent years. As the job market has gotten more and more competitive, applicants ... typically panic and send out as many resumes as they can, all in hopes of a single interview. This mass application strategy rarely works though, because research shows that most people are hired outside the normal application process.<sup>2</sup>

David Perry's research demonstrates that "job boards account for about 3% of the available jobs." He explains, "Monster and CareerBuilder, for example, each has approximately 75,000 customers. While that's huge, it represents just a fraction of the 10,000,000 employers in the United States."<sup>3</sup>

He goes on to state what *every knowledgeable career professional will tell you*: "In general, you will be much more effective in your job search if you are identifying and targeting companies and hiring managers and then powerfully conveying to them the value you can deliver versus going after the posted jobs that most everyone else is going after. However, there will be times when a posted opportunity is worthy of your consideration. The best way to separate yourself from the masses is still to identify the potential hiring manager(s) and connect with them directly, versus simply applying online, which, most likely, will only take you into the proverbial black hole."<sup>4</sup>

## **Endlessly Tweaking Your Resume**

Most jobseekers entertain the fantasy that if they can only get their resume just right, it will be eagerly welcomed by recruiters and decision-makers alike with dancing and shouts of "We found her!"

The truth is, for most of us, no matter how carefully we have crafted our resume, it probably doesn't look very different from other resumes. By the time someone looks at it, assuming anyone looks at it at all, they are probably tired of looking at resumes. Employers typically receive hundreds—in some cases, thousands—of resumes per job opening.

The laws of supply and demand tell us that the more attractive a job, the more resumes they will receive.

*Think about that. Your odds are better for a less attractive opportunity.  
Is this really the way you want to play this game?*

Don't misunderstand. I'm not saying a bad resume will suffice. You need a resume that emphasizes your accomplishments with short narratives of the difference you have made. If your job history is clean and progresses nicely in an industry, make it chronological. If your job history is a little choppy with changes in industry, make it functional. In either case, make it strong. Be sure to use appropriate keywords. Then forget about it. Move on to the real work of targeted contact development.



## **Chasing Recruiters**

The term "recruiter" can mean many things. It may refer to an internal recruiter that works for an employer as part of their human resource department. It may also apply to headhunters, search firms, staffing firms, or employment agencies.

Generally, employment agencies focus on lower level clerical, administrative positions, and some entry-level jobs.

Search firms and headhunters typically specialize within an industry and focus on executive, managerial, and professional positions.

Staffing firms usually work with people in more technical and contract roles.

In all cases, the term “recruiter” implies someone who is working on behalf of an employer, not a job seeker. They're looking for a candidate that meets the qualifications of the job order they have been given.

If they see you as eminently qualified, you will have their attention. At the highest levels of employment, you don't find the recruiter; the recruiter finds you.

If you have had a conversation with a recruiter and have not heard from them in a while, it is acceptable to follow up with them. But don't be surprised if you don't get a response. At this point, there's a fine line between being persistent and looking desperate.

Badgering a recruiter with lots of emails and phone calls is far more likely to hurt than help you. Preserve your dignity. Move on.

## **Lost in LinkedIn**

With social media, it's easy to get lost in the options and forget why you're there. You may start with the real purpose of making contacts and doing some research. But next thing you know, your time is frittered away reading posts and articles, and endlessly editing your profile.

Social networks, mainly LinkedIn, can be great as a research and contact development tool. But if you have added a contact to your network, you really don't have much unless there's been some real communication. By real communication, I mean something more than letting them know you're looking for a job and asking them to let you know if they are aware of opportunities.

A meaningful dialogue online or through email regarding your interests, value proposition, and their knowledge of an industry or company might be a good start. It's even better if that dialogue happens by phone and best if it occurs in person at some place like Starbucks.

With LinkedIn, as I indicated previously, your best results will likely come through second-level contacts—someone who knows someone who knows you.

## **Faux Networking**

When I ask job seekers what they have been doing to find the right opportunity, they typically indicate that they have been applying on company websites and job boards, and learning to use LinkedIn. And then they will say something like, "...and, oh yeah, networking."

When I inquire about what exactly they have been doing in their networking, I typically hear things like:

"I've gotten together with a few old friends for lunch or at Starbucks to see if they know of any openings."

or

"I sent an email to everyone in my network to let them know I'm available and looking."

Let's be clear. Neither of these remotely resembles networking.

Networking at its most basic level will involve developing *new* contacts.

Networking at its best is a strategic, targeted contact development process in which you are communicating a personal brand, asking intelligent questions to gain relevant information, and offering your assistance for the career objectives of your new contact.

You want to work to create a dialogue with:

1. Influential people in your target industries
2. Decision-makers in your target companies
3. People at any level working in the companies and industries that interest you.

When talking to people that you already know, start with this simple question: "Who do you know in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry?" Or: "Who do you know that works at \_\_\_\_\_ company?"

When approaching someone you don't know for a conversation, say something like: "As someone knowledgeable about the \_\_\_\_\_ industry, I'm hoping you might briefly share your insights regarding current industry trends and its future direction in our area."

*As you methodically make contacts and communicate your brand, you will create a critical level of activity where opportunities will begin to develop informally.*

*This will, by far, be the best use of your time.*

A job search is challenging enough without the added frustration of wasted, unproductive time. Regularly evaluate your use of time in your job search and consider having a friend or coach provide some accountability.

The genuinely productive activities seem like more work. However, they will move you much more effectively toward your goal of a new job, and they will almost always result in a better opportunity.

# 6

## **“My Inbox Is Full of Garbage” Frustrations with Job Search Spam**

If you have posted a resume, you will inevitably receive a lot of emails regarding jobs for which you have absolutely no interest. For most people, this is very frustrating. You can't help but wonder why someone would send you information on jobs that are so different from the kinds of things you are pursuing. Why is this happening?

Like other markets, the job market is governed by supply and demand. Employers compete to attract talented individuals, and individuals compete for better employment opportunities—the better the opportunity, the greater the demand for it. Conversely, the less desirable jobs will have trouble getting any takers.

Consider the following:

- When word gets out that a highly desirable position is developing, talented people will jockey for position to get the attention of the right people. The employer won't have to go very far to

find someone they like for the opportunity. As a result, that job opening may never get posted. Or, it may get posted, but they already know who they want.

- In many cases, the natural thought process of a decision-maker who becomes aware that they are going to need someone is “Who do I know that would be good in this position?” and “Who do I trust and respect that might know someone who would be good in this position?” They will exhaust these possibilities before they even think of collecting resumes of applicants that they know nothing about. As such, merely applying for posted jobs, or hoping someone sees your posted resume or LinkedIn profile, will likely leave you out of contention for many of the better opportunities.
- By contrast, there are many high-turnover, less desirable jobs that some companies can’t keep filled. If you post a resume, you will undoubtedly receive inquiries from companies that would very much like to interview you about their less desirable “opportunity.” They know they have to go through a lot of people to get someone to even consider the job posting, and they have to hire a lot of people to get some who would stick around.

So, what can you do? Improving your resume may help a little when it comes to being considered for better jobs, but that won’t likely reduce the garbage in your inbox. As long as your resume is posted, you will be solicited for less desirable jobs.

Cutting through the clutter to pursue better opportunities will likely come through a more targeted contact development process geared toward initiating a dialogue with decision-makers and

influencers. That will put you on the radar for the more desirable opportunities. It will be more work, but it will be worth it.



## **Last Thoughts**

Through these six chapters, you have noticed some recurring themes.

- You can't settle for being one of the masses and expect exceptional results. Be intentional and purposeful, not passive and reactive.
- The most effective job search and career management strategy involves developing informal targeted contacts.
- While communicating an effective personal branding message doesn't come naturally for most people, it is an important life skill.
- Given what is at stake, career satisfaction, income, life balance, etc., it may be time to consider having a coach.

May you find, and thrive in, the work you were meant to do.

## **Links**

Don Huse on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/donhuse/>

Venturion Career Management

<https://venturion.net/>

The Job Search Strategy Guide

<http://jobsearchstrategyguide.com/>

## Notes

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1. The names have been changed in this story for privacy considerations.
  2. Chris Guillebeau, *Born for This: How to Find the Work You Were Meant to Do* (New York: Crown Business, 2016), 200.
  3. Jay Conrad Levinson and David E. Perry, *Guerrilla Marketing for Job Hunters 3.0* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 190.
  4. Levinson and Perry, *Guerrilla Marketing for Job Hunters 3.0*, 176-177.