

Ask the Career Coach: 2010 Plan

By Lisa Chenofsky Singer

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

How does someone sustain a prolonged job search? I was laid off in early 2009 and here I am in 2010 still unemployed!

J.T., Short Hills

Searching for a job is a full time job. The process of searching can be an overwhelming task if you are not focused. Having a plan will allow you to feel a sense of control.

Social media is a critical component for today's job search efforts. Social media is only one of many tools in your search efforts. The key is to understand the message you want to convey through it. How you connect is just about the tools—some tools may include LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, meetup.com. But the bottom line is the message. Then managing and building relationships for the long term is another critical component.

Typically when someone loses their job, the immediate reaction is to search for the same or similar role at another company. In this job market it may be possible, but being creative and thinking out of the box may be the most helpful during this transition period. Reflect on the skills you have, how they are transferable and how you can upgrade them if needed. One easy way to open some job options is to search the job boards on key words (skill based words in the advanced job search option) rather than on job titles. This approach will help you identify new jobs that you may have not considered.

During transitions people begin to think of their career development when, in reality, you should be planning and managing your career throughout your life. Think about how you can maintain and develop new skills either on the job, volunteering and/or with education—possibly gaining certifications as appropriate for your field when working and during transition periods.

You need to understand where your field is headed and what may be required of you down the road. This can be achieved by reading online, following trade and industry journals, attending professional organizational meetings and finding lectures and seminars, spending time in your public libraries learning some of the resources available to help you in your job search. Volunteering will help build your network as well. When you have a game plan you can track what is working best for you and modify your activities based on the effectiveness or ROI.

To sustain yourself, you need to figure out what gives you energy. Is it exercising, being with friends and family, reading new ideas? Once you figure this out, put this activity on

your weekly schedule along with your job search activities. Having a schedule will help to keep you focused. Remember, a job search is a full time job, so plan out your strategy.

A job is just one element of your career. The other elements include the planning of your career—identifying your goals and where you want to be now and in the future. Understanding your long-term vision will help you achieve your goal. Think of your career as an evolving process with a plan to follow so you can reach your goals.

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is www.ChenofskySinger.com.