

Ask the Career Coach: Wait It Out? Or a New Strategy?

Is it better to wait for the job market to get better? Or should you rethink your approach to searching for a job?

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As appeared in MillburnPatch.com on August 24, 2010 (www.MillburnPatch.com)

Dear Career Coach Lisa,

The job market appears so soft that I almost want to wait it out. Is this a realist way to tackle it?

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So the question could be "Do you wait it out or plan your next move with a new strategy?"

Depending on your career choice, is the market soft or is it evolving? Do you need to retrain yourself based on changing market demands? Do you need to see your career from a new perspective? Not knowing your career, are others in your profession struggling as well? Is it geographical based?

Only you know your financial situation and what you are capable of handling during a transition time. One basic rule of survival is to have a financial cushion so you can coast through a number of months of living, expenses with funds stashed away for a "rainy day." The number of months is up to you depending on your comfort level. You may also examine your expenses and see where you can reduce your costs.

If you choose to stay out of the market during this soft time, think about what you can do to develop new skills or focus on your interests that may open new possibilities for you in the future. Even if you choose to stay out, plan for your next move while waiting it out. Consider sharpening your skills for the career you are choosing to stay with or gain knowledge and/or certifications to facilitate your next career transition.

Another approach may be to review what is working and what is not working in your job search strategy. Sometimes modifying your approach can make all the difference. If you are conducting a job search, are you thinking short-term or long-term? Are you considering what you enjoy doing? What skills do you have relative to what is needed in this market? If you possess the skills needed currently, what can you do to push yourself ahead and be prepared for your next step?

How are you networking within your industry or area of expertise? How are you entering the new space where you want to be in the future? What does your social presence say about you? How do you build your reputation? What are you known for? What do former colleagues say about you? These are all things to consider.

You are networking all the time, formally in planned events and informally when you are running errands. How others perceive you is your reputation. Are you the person who smiles and greets others with a warm hello or do you growl often? What kind of person would you like to work with if all factors were the same except for personality? Would you choose someone you like or someone you do not like? For most people it would be the one they like. How do people remember those they meet? People like others based on the connected or fond memories of their meetings. Think about how you want people to perceive you when you are out and about.

Let people know what you are up to and what types of opportunities you would like. It allows them the opportunity to offer to help you if they are able or wish to. Asking for help is one approach. Another is to engage people so they want to help you naturally. When you are on an interview, consider the connection you make with the people you meet. Yes, you want to share your technical competencies, but you also want to pitch your likeability.

About this column: "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.