CHAPTER 15: JOB SEARCH AND CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS

This final chapter of the text focuses indirectly on interpersonal skill development: Conducting a successful job search and managing one’s career both require good interpersonal skills.

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND LECTURE NOTES

The aspects of career success described in this chapter are divided into four segments: conducting a job search, understanding two major types of career paths, career-advancement methods, and dealing with career barriers. The previous 14 chapters also dealt with topics that facilitate career success.

I. CONDUCTING A JOB CAMPAIGN

The vast majority of workers have to conduct a job campaign at various times in their career.

A. Job-Hunting Tactics

The tactics described here can be used as a checklist to ensure not having neglected something important during the emotionally-charged job hunt.

1. Identify Your Job Objectives. An effective job search begins with a clear perception of what kind of position (or positions) you are seeking. Your chances of finding suitable employment increase when several different types of positions will satisfy your job objectives.

2. Be Aware of Qualifications Sought by Employers. What you are looking for in an employer should be matched against what an employer is looking for in an employee. Self-assessment Quiz 14-1 is a useful checklist of qualifications sought by employers.

3. Identify Your Skills and Potential Contribution. Today’s job market is skill based. Show what skills you have that can help the employer.

4. Develop a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy. A vital job-finding strategy is to use multiple approaches to reach the right prospective employer.

5. Use Networking to Reach Company Insiders. The majority of successful job campaigns stem from personal contacts. In regard to job hunting, networking is contacting friends and acquaintances and building systematically on these relationships to create a still wider set of contacts that might lead to employment.
6. **Use Internet Job Banks and R sum Database Services.** The Internet is a standard part of job hunting, even for middle management and executive positions. Many position announcements on the Internet require the job seeker to send a r sum by attached file or an electronic r sum. Although the method appears so effective, the Internet is just one source of leads that should be used in conjunction with other job-finding methods.

7. **Smile at Network Members and Interviewers.** Assuming that you have the right qualifications, the simple act of smiling can be an effective job-hunting technique.

8. **Smooth Out Rough Spots in Your Background.** Any job seeker who has severe negative factors in his or her background cannot readily change the past. Yet the job seeker can look to have untrue or distorted negative facts changed. And maybe a negative reference can be negotiated to one that is less harsh.

B. The Job R sum and Cover Letter
No matter what method of job hunting you choose, inevitably somebody will ask you for a r sum.

1. **R sum Purpose.** The r sum is a marketing tool, with a specific purpose of helping you obtain an interview that can lead to a job. (Yet some people with skills in hot demand are hired on the basis of their r sum alone.)

2. **R sum Length and Format.** A one-page r sum is mostly for career beginners. Employers want so much detail about skills that a two-page r sum is preferable for people with some full-time work experience. A study with 64 business professionals found that the following r sum characteristics were more likely to lead to first choices for an interview: One page in contrast to two; a specific objective statement versus a general one; relevant coursework better than no coursework; GPAs of 3.0 in contrast to no GPA listed; GPAs of 3.50 in contracts to 2.75; and accomplishments section in comparison to no accomplishment statement.

   Electronic r sum s emphasizing key words are increasing in popularity.

3. **The Cover Letter.** A r sum should be accompanied by a cover letter explaining who you are and why you are applying for this particular position, thereby customizing your inquiry. Sometimes it is helpful to prepare an attention-getting cover letter in which you make an assertive statement about how you intend to help the employer deal with an
important problem. A personal contact might be mentioned as part of the attention grabber.

C. Performing Well In A Job Interview
A telephone-screening interview is a quick check for oral communication skills. Another type of screening interview is to respond to computerized questions, including a sample job problem. Team interviewing is becoming more common. A general guide for performing well in the job interview is to present a positive, but accurate picture of yourself. Keep these points for a successful interview in mind:

1. Be prepared, look relaxed, and make the interviewer feel comfortable.
2. Establish a link between you and the prospective employer.
3. Ask perceptive questions.
4. Be prepared to discuss your strengths and developmental opportunities.
5. Be prepared to respond to behavioral interview (sampling of job behavior) questions.
6. Show how you can help the employer.
7. Use body language that projects confidence and decisiveness.
8. Send a follow-up letter.

II. THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL CAREER PATHS
If your goals are laid out systematically to lead to your ultimate career goal, you have established a career path, a sequence of positions necessary to achieve a goal.

A. The Vertical (Traditional) Career Path
A traditional career path is based on the assumption that a person will occupy a series of positions, each at a higher level of responsibility than the previous one. The vertical career path is synonymous with "climbing the ladder." A career path should be related to the present and future demands of one firm or the industry. Personal goals should be incorporated into a career path to strive for a mesh between work and personal life. The steps, or goals, in a career path include a time element, which is helpful for sound career management even in work environments that are less predictable than previously.

B. The Horizontal Career Path
A significant feature of the horizontal career path is that people are more likely to advance by moving sideways than moving up. Instead of climbing the ladder, the person is placed in a jungle gym in which he or she makes a series of moves in different directions. With a horizontal career path, the major reward is no longer promotion, but the opportunity to gain valuable experience. The horizontal career path is closely linked to the new employment contract that offers shared responsibility for career growth. Instead of being offered job security, the worker
becomes more employable. The company provides the environment for learning, and employees are responsible for developing their skills.

A horizontal career path, as well as a vertical one, does not necessarily mean the person stays with the same firm. In the horizontal path, a person may work at the same level in several firms. Also, as with a vertical career path, contingency plans are useful.

III. CAREER ADVANCEMENT STRATEGIES AND TACTICS
Improving interpersonal relationships in general helps career advancement. Here we describe thirteen other key strategies and tactics for career advancement, whether the advancement be vertical, horizontal, or a combination of the two.

1. Be Passionate About Your Work. Successful people in all fields are passionate about their work, thereby not relying exclusively on external rewards.

2. Develop a Code of Professional Ethics. A code of professional ethics helps a worker deal with such issues as accepting bribes; back stabbing coworkers; and sexually harassing a coworker.

3. Develop a Proactive Personality. A proactive personality is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and brings about environmental change. Highly proactive people identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative and keep trying until they bring about meaningful change. The proactive personality displays organizational citizenship behavior because he or she is a good citizen who will step outside the job description to be helpful. Two studies showed that being a proactive personality is positively related to salary, promotions, initiative, and career satisfaction.

4. Keep Growing Through Continuous Learning and Self-Development. Continuous learning is linked to the new employment contract. Many companies support continuous learning because they perceive themselves to be learning organizations.

5. Document Your Accomplishments. An accurate record of what you have accomplished can be valuable when being considered for reassignment, promotion, or applying for a position outside your company. Point to tangible, objective accomplishments rather than subjective evaluations.

6. Project a Professional Image. For advancement, your clothing, desk and
work area, speech, and general knowledge should project the image of a professional, responsible person. A challenge in projecting a professional image is to figure out what constitutes a professional image in your particular environment.

7. *Perceive Yourself as a Provider of Services.* One perspective is that everyone should see himself or herself as a *personal service business entity.* You are a business, offering the company a valuable service. You keep offering the service as long as the company keeps you on the payroll and you enjoy the work.

8. *Apply the High-Performance Pyramid.* The total person is involved in the high-performance pyramid. You must therefore train yourself as a corporate athlete to perform well at four levels: physical capacity, emotional capacity, mental capacity, and spiritual capacity.

9. *Develop Depth and Breadth.* In general it pays to have good depth in one area of expertise, yet also to acquire broad experience. Breadth can be achieved in one company, in different companies, and in different industries.

10. *Rely on a Network of Successful People.* Network members can assist with difficult job problems, provide emotional support, buy from you, and offer you good prices. Networking might be more inclusive in the beginning, then narrowed down to more influential people later on.

11. *Work with a Mentor.* Having a mentor can facilitate career advancement. Ideally a person should develop a small network of mentors who give advice and counsel on different topics such as job advancement opportunities and how to solve a difficult problem.

12. *Find a Good Organization-Person Fit.* It is best to work for a company where your personality and style fit the organization culture. A person-organization fit is the compatibility of the individual and the organization.

13. *Take Sensible Risks.* People who make it big in their careers usually take sensible risks on their journey to success. An example would be joining a fledgling company that offers big promises but a modest starting salary.

IV. OVERCOMING CAREER BARRIERS

Another major aspect of career management is to be able to overcome career
barriers or hurdles. People who are resilient, or *psychologically hardy*, have developed skills to overcome problems.

A. Coping with Job Loss
Even during prosperous times, coping with job loss can be a big emotional hurt and a major inconvenience. Have good credentials, but keep in mind other approaches:

1. Avoid panic.
2. Do a reality check.
3. Guard against depression and stay physically healthy.
4. Avoid bitterness and making angry statements about your past employer especially to prospective employers.
5. Give full-time attention to conducting a job campaign.
6. If job opportunities are limited in your field, search out new ways to use your old skills.

B. Dealing with the Glass Ceiling
Many minority-group members and women complain that after getting off to a good start, a subtle barrier to growth emerges. A *glass ceiling* is an invisible but difficult-to-penetrate barrier to promotion based on subtle attitudes and prejudices. Many women and minority-group members are making progress in breaking the glass ceiling.

A survey of 2,500 women found the following factors were associated with women advancing from entry-level positions into management: (a) working closely with a female manager, and working in companies with a higher proportion of women managers; (b) receiving early encouragement from coworkers and supervisors. A study by the career firm Catalyst underscored again how much a mentor can contribute to the advancement of a minority-group member (in this case, women).

**ANSWERS TO DISCUSSION AND REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Identify four situations in a career where conducting a job campaign would be necessary.

   A job campaign would be necessary for (a) finding a full-time professional job as one is completing a degree, (b) finding a job after a job loss such as being downsized or fired, (c) searching for another position in a large company at any point in a career, and (d) career switching.

2. Why do so many employers look for signs of emotional intelligence when hiring candidates for professional-level positions?
Employers have always sought candidates for professional positions who can get along well with work associates. The publicity attached to emotional intelligence in recent years has led employers to recognize that having good emotional intelligence is a major contributor to interpersonal skills.

3. During a labor shortage (when there are more positions open than qualified applicants) why is it still important to have good job search skills?

Good job search skills are important during a tight labor market to help the job seeker obtain a better job. Competition for good jobs remains strong even during a labor shortage.

4. What is your evaluation of the effectiveness of a job hunter using the Internet as his or her only method of finding a job?

Despite the growth of job hunting through the Internet, only about one-third of employees are recruited through the Internet. To ignore other methods of job finding is to handicap yourself. Even majors in information systems or computer science do not rely exclusively on the Internet to find positions.

5. Why is a horizontal career path referred to as a jungle gym?

A horizontal career path is referred to as a jungle gym because when a person maneuvers a jungle gym he or she makes many lateral moves from one place on the gym to another. A horizontal career path also involves many lateral moves. (The developers of this analogy seem to have forgotten that a person can also move up and down the jungle gym.)

6. Give an example from your own life in which you behaved as if you were a proactive personality.

Students might be able to identify situations in which they took the initiative to resolve a problem such as identifying a parts shortage. Another example of a proactive personality might be having identified the hazards investing in Internet companies before others recognized the upcoming crash.

7. In what way do political tactics assist career advancement?

A major payoff from the skillful utilization of political tactics is to enhance career advancement. A key example is that political tactics can be used to develop a network of influential people who will accelerate your career. Political tactics are also used to gain the visibility necessary to advance.
8. How would you rate the effectiveness of sending e-mail messages to people as a method of sustaining a network?

E-mail has become a top-rated vehicle for sustaining a network. Reading e-mail allows people to control time better than conversing on a telephone. E-mail has also become the communication mode of choice for many business people. However, the person skilled in networking should look for opportunities to supplement e-mail with telephone calls and in-person interactions.

9. In your own words, what is a glass ceiling? Why the choice of words, glass ceiling?

The glass ceiling analogy refers to a career barrier that is invisible yet difficult to penetrate. Another interpretation is that glass can readily be shattered, also this is not the intent of the analogy.

10. What is the most useful idea you picked up from this chapter about either conducting a job campaign or managing your career?

Responses to this question will vary considerably. The author of this book would be happy if a lot of students said that conducting a job campaign or managing his or her career is likely to be more effective if supported by planning and specific tactics.

ANSWERS TO CASE QUESTIONS

Why Isn’t My R sum Getting Results?

Students will enjoy the opportunity to critique someone else’s r sum. The process might help them identify errors they have made in developing their own r sum s.

1. What suggestions can you make to Billy Joe for improving his r sum? Or does it require improvement?

Billy Joe’s r sum needs considerable work, including these suggestions:
(a) The phrase "Please call after 7 PM weekday nights" seems more suited for selling a used car than for a r sum.
(b) The long-range goal seems pompous considering where Billy Joe is hoping to start.
(c) The layout is unappealing. Perhaps the section heads should be moved to the left side, and some items should be bulleted.
(d) The statement, "friends say I’m a born" leader appears tacky.
(e) Excluding Jill Baxter from the reference list is refreshingly honest, but does not communicate a professional image, especially the point about a personality clash.
(f) In general, the r sum appears skimpy.
2. What is your evaluation of Billy Joe’s approach to creating a cover letter?

Writing a note in pencil on a business card might be too breezy and informal for the majority of prospective employers. Yet its candor and informality has some charm.

**COMMENTS ABOUT CASES AND EXERCISES**

*Qualifications Sought by Employers*

This exercise has several potential values such as reinforcing the importance of skills students are already developing, helping understand success factors in business, and identifying needs for development. The list of qualifications also might give the impression that employers are somewhat unrealistic if they expect all this talent in one candidate.

*Job Hunting on the Net*

Students should enjoy this challenge because it goes way beyond just clicking on Web sites. Results will vary from month to month on the successes of the search due to the dynamic nature of the job market and positions listed on Web sites.

*The Job Interview*

A useful outcome from this exercise is demonstrating that conducting a job interview is a complex skill. A common error the interviewers make is to ask long, multifaceted questions and talk more than the interviewee.

*The Career Quiz*

Carole Kanchier’s quiz gives students the opportunity to think about a dimension of behavior that is important but not mentioned so frequently: attitudes about career growth.

*Building Your Network*

Students who are committed to building their networks should benefit handsomely from this exercise. Even if people do not use the entire method, they should be able to come away with a couple of useful networking ideas. Linking network members to goals is a high-impact idea.
EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

(a) 1. Which one of the following is least likely to be a qualification sought by an employer?
   a. ability and interest in working alone most of the time
   b. customer service orientation
   c. adaptability to change
   d. cross-cultural skills

(d) 2. The majority of hiring decisions in today's job market are based on
   a. the extent of their formal education.
   b. their relevant coursework.
   c. their willingness to work long hours.
   d. the skills they possess.

(d) 3. When you apply for a job
   a. explain how much you need the job.
   b. show a willingness to start at the bottom.
   c. talk about your outstanding personal traits.
   d. identify how you can help the employer.

(b) 4. The job-finding tactic called develop a comprehensive marketing strategy centers around
   a. identifying your potential contribution.
   b. using multiple approaches to reach the right employer.
   c. smiling at interviewers and contacts.
   d. identifying your position objective.

(a) 5. Job hunting on the Internet
   a. has become standard practice.
   b. is almost exclusively for computer-related positions.
   c. requires membership in an online job-search service.
   d. eliminates the need for an in-person interview.

(b) 6. According to one authority, smiling during a job interview is important because
   a. it's a great way to trick interviewers.
   b. happy people get jobs.
   c. it makes you look younger.
   d. overly serious job candidates are usually not welcome.
7. During a job interview, it is best to use body language to
   a. communicate the idea that you badly need the job.
   b. appear as if you have several job offers to consider.
   c. intimidate the interviewer.
   d. project confidence and decisiveness.

8. A key feature of an electronic r sum is that it
   a. is used exclusively for Internet job searches.
   b. is sent by fax machine.
   c. contains words designed to fit a key word search.
   d. is prepared by a word processor.

9. An attention-getting cover letter should be sent to a prospective employer
   a. only if the employer makes such a request.
   b. along with the job r sum.
   c. as a follow-up to the job r sum.
   d. only if they list a job opening.

10. The best strategy to use in presenting yourself in an employment interview
    is to
    a. try to outsmart the interviewer.
    b. stare the interviewer straight in the eye.
    c. be dramatic about your past accomplishments.
    d. present yourself favorably but accurately.

11. Which of the following questions would most likely be part of a behavioral
    interview?
    a. How are you feeling and acting today?
    b. Describe for me a time in which you solved a tough problem under a
time deadline.
    c. Tell me about your record of attendance and punctuality.
    d. What type of animal do you admire the most?

12. The traditional career path is based on the assumption that the person
    a. grows by learning new skills.
    b. stays with an employer for almost an entire career.
    c. continues to take on more responsibility.
    d. stays with the same area of specialization throughout the career.

13. Developing a career path refers to
    a. finding the path to happiness.
b. laying out a path to reach key goals.
c. creating a path for your friends.
d. tracking your career mistakes.

(a) 14. It is recommended that your career goals should
a. influence your personal goals.
b. take priority over your personal goals.
c. replace your personal goals.
d. be set after achieving your personal goals.

(c) 15. The major reward in a horizontal career path is the opportunity to
a. receive regular promotions.
b. switch from one field to another.
c. develop new technical and professional skills.
d. have a series of mentors.

(a) 16. The career-advancement strategy of being passionate about your work is closely tied in with
a. building your career around an area of expertise.
b. developing a proactive personality.
c. developing a code of professional ethics.
d. projecting a professional image.

(d) 17. A distinguishing characteristic of a proactive personality is that the individual
a. avoids organizational citizenship behavior.
b. freely criticizes his or her boss.
c. patterns his or her behavior after coworkers.
d. brings about environmental change (on the job).

(b) 18. To perceive yourself as a personal service business entity means that you
a. are a contract worker, rather than a permanent employee.
b. are a business, offering the company a valuable service.
c. work exclusively for firms in the manufacturing rather than the service sector.
d. focus your efforts on customer satisfaction.

(c) 19. To apply the high-performance pyramid to your career, you must perform well
a. at your first two job-levels.
b. when you are multitasking.
c. at four levels: body, emotion, mind, and the spirit.
d. at all three points in the career triangle.

(c) 20. When first developing your network, it is recommended that you
a. only include people doing work similar to yours.
b. offer people prizes for becoming network members.
c. include a large number of people.
d. be quite restrictive about who can be in your network.

(b) 21. Margot, a senior executive, takes Jason under her wing and coaches him about executive work. In this role, Margot is referred to as a
   a. corporate trainer.
   b. mentor.
   c. corporate mother.
   d. human resource specialist.

(d) 22. Rocky is an adventuresome, risk-taking person who joins a slow-moving, conservative company. Several months later he leaves in frustration. The career-advancement tactic Rocky neglected was
   a. work with a mentor.
   b. take sensible risks.
   c. develop depth and breadth.
   d. find a good organization-person fit.

(b) 23. A psychologically hardy individual is one who
   a. laughs when confronted with adversity.
   b. has developed the skills to overcome problems.
   c. achieves career success rapidly.
   d. welcomes belittling from others.

(a) 24. Which one of the following is not particularly recommended as a tactic for dealing with job loss?
   a. Conduct a job campaign, slowly on a part-time basis.
   b. Do a reality check.
   c. Have great credentials.
   d. Avoid making angry statements about your past employer.

(b) 25. A study of minority-group women noted that the leading reason for not breaking the glass ceiling was
   a. limited information technology skills.
   b. the lack of an influential mentor.
   c. failure to attain good job performance.
   d. pushing so hard to the point of being a pest.
True/False

(F) 1. When job hunting, it is best to express your job objective in vague terms so your qualifications will fit a wide range of positions.

(F) 2. Because technology changes so rapidly, appropriate education for the position under consideration has lost its importance as a qualification sought by employers.

(T) 3. A comprehensive marketing strategy for job hunting includes using multiple approaches to finding a job.

(F) 4. One advantage of using networking to find a job is that the tactic is used so infrequently that the people you approach to network will be pleasantly surprised.

(T) 5. A useful approach to reaching company insiders is to visit a company’s Web site and following the instructions about applying for a position.

(T) 6. Positions listed on job-hunting Web sites now include many higher-level positions including those for middle managers and executives.

(F) 7. Job hunting on the Internet is particularly valuable because it is so confidential with little chance of your current employer finding out that you are looking for a new position.

(T) 8. A consumer report as used in screening job applicants is a report of an individual’s reputation based on interviews with coworkers, neighbors, and others.

(F) 9. A distinguishing feature of an electronic r sum is that focuses almost exclusively on computer and information-technology skills.

(F) 10. The cover letter that accompanies a job r sum is much less customized to the particular employer than is the r sum.

(F) 11. A behavioral interview attempts to see how upset the candidate becomes when placed under pressure such as being insulted.

(T) 12. Sitting up straight during a job interview is recommended because it projects confidence and decisiveness.

(F) 13. The vertical career path focuses on long periods of job rotation and acquiring
new skills.

(T) 14. In the horizontal career path, the person moves from one position to another quite often at the same level.

(F) 15. The horizontal career path emphasizes offering job security and long-term employment to loyal workers.

(T) 16. Being passionate about your work is likely to contribute to your career growth and company productivity.

(F) 17. A proactive personality will typically wait for the company to point out what problems need fixing.

(T) 18. A person who displays organizational citizenship behavior will step outside his or her job description to get work accomplished.

(T) 19. A key part of projecting a professional image is your speech patterns including grammar and sentence structure.

(F) 20. An image consultant cited in the human relations text said that projecting a professional image is easier than ever today because the rules are so clear cut.

(F) 21. Perceiving yourself as a provider of services to an organization is likely to decrease your feelings of job security because you develop the attitude of a temporary worker.

(F) 22. To apply the high-performance pyramid to your career you must display exceptional performance in front of your boss, his or her boss, and your coworkers.

(T) 23. Career breadth can be achieved by both holding positions in different aspects of the firm, or by working in different industries.

(F) 24. The general point of a finding a good person-organization fit is to work for employers where you have plenty of friends.

(T) 25. A study about career advancement found that women who moved from entry-level positions into management worked for companies in which there was a relatively high proportion of female managers.