

Don't Hunt For Jobs...Try Job Dating

The wrong paradigm will lead you to use the wrong tools.

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Job Hunting: The very idea of “job hunting” forces people to think about searching for jobs in the wrong way. There are two ways to hunt: the first involves tracking, stalking, spotting, and capturing/shooting your prey. The second involves setting up, hiding, maybe baiting, and waiting for your prey to show up. Or, maybe you'd like to be hunted: you can make yourself available and visible, and hope that an employer finds you (which might be the case if you have rare skills, but not for most of us).

Is job hunting what you *are* doing; is this what you *want* to be doing? If not, consider a different paradigm: “Job Marketing” or what I prefer to call it, “Job Dating”. We all know how to date, but we often forget to apply those skills to a professional setting. I call it “Job Dating” because looking for a new job is a lot like dating, and dating, in turn, is really Marketing and Sales 101.

Five Steps to Job Dating

Step 1. Make yourself attractive. Decide who and what you are. Inventory your education, skills, experience, and attributes and determine what makes you unique, what makes you stand out from the crowd. This is often summed up as part of the elevator speech and on top of your resume, and in marketing terms, this information is the “product” and often the “position” or “brand”.

Step 2. Get yourself noticed. Next, you want to find the potential employer and perhaps help them find you. You get noticed with a variety of tools: include a *strong* resume and cover letter that focuses on benefits* you have to offer, networking with others who can help you, establishing an identify on LinkedIn, arranging introductions to people at a company where you want to work via informational interviews, responding to ads, making cold calls (in person or mail), writing articles, giving speeches, volunteering, interning, etc. In marketing terms, this is the “promotion” step, and in sales, it is the “awareness” step.

Step 3. Prepare for the date. Learn all you can about the company and the position. Learn as much as you can about the person with whom you will be interviewing. The internet and social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) provide a rich trove of information to learn about companies and about people that you will find useful for understanding the company and its culture. This will show your interest and provide fodder for asking meaningful questions during the interview. Finally, it shouldn't have to be said, but *dress appropriately* for the interview (and if you're truly clueless, overdress or call the company secretary and ask for advice).

Step 4. Go on a date (job interview). One rarely gets a proposal or a job offer on the first get-together. The purpose of the first interview or date is to get to know one another. It is a two way street. Many a first date has been terminal, because one party talked solely about themselves. Similarly, on a job interview, the interviewer wants to know how you will satisfy their needs, and how you will meet their needs better than other candidates available at that time. *Many interviewees focus on what they want, not on what they can do for the employer.*

In your opening remarks, and in your answers to questions, you need to tell them and demonstrate with stories and examples, that you have the skills, experience, and determination to meet their needs. The interviewer also wants to know and feel that you are *interested in them*. You do this by demonstrating you have done your homework, by telling them in your closing remarks you are interested, by a follow-up thank you note, and follow-up status calls. In second interviews, you can demonstrate your interest and knowledge by doing some homework, such as preparing an “onboarding” schedule should you accept the job, or possibly a brief marketing outline, or some ideas regarding a problem the interviewer may have shared. In sales, these are the “comprehension” and “believability” phases.

Step 5. Get married, stay married. Once you are done “dating” (interviews and reference checks), you will get an offer. You will want to remain an asset to the company, so you will need to work hard, stay alert to problems and opportunities, educate yourself, and keep letting the employer know and feel that you like the job and the company. In sales, these are the “trial” and “satisfaction” phases.

**Note: “benefits” refer to what the employer receives by hiring you, versus the features you bring. For example, a benefit might be increased productivity or profitability by hiring you, versus your skills, a feature.*