

## Your Career Transition Support System

I write and advise frequently about how to see the typically unpleasant job search or career change as a positive experience – by putting concrete plans around it, noting every accomplishment and by recognizing it as an opportunity to meet new people and learn about different companies and industries while reaching for your right livelihood. Sounds easy, huh? Not if you're spending your time with information and people who bring you down.

Now more than ever, it's necessary for you to step into a positive mindset wholeheartedly, and to consciously surround yourself with all things motivating and inspiring. That means everything you read, listen to, do and watch. And, most importantly, surround yourself with upbeat, supportive people. Enough of this bad news from doom and gloom naysayers! Protect yourself and your future by seeking out the good.

While in a job search, it's very easy to get trapped in desperate thinking. I know. I've been there myself, which explains why I voluntarily went back to the industry I vowed to leave for good not twice, but 3 times. I felt desperate and overwhelmed seeing the checkbook balance dwindle and "no thank you" letters flow in as I tried to change career paths. So, simply put, I gave up on my dream of pursuing the work life I wanted until I started taking better care of my attitude. By first being very clear about what you want and what you're not willing to settle for, you can keep the dream alive. That next job may not look exactly like what you've got in mind, but it will be closer. Pull yourself up out of down times by reaching for positive reminders, pictures, places, and people.

Be protective of yourself while in transition mode. Put down the paper and turn off the Internet, TV or radio when the news starts to weigh you down. Yes, there are downturns happening and companies still reducing their workforces. Those facts don't have to live in your head and affect your thinking and transition activities. Find the companies that are hiring and the parts of the economy that are thriving. Put your energy into finding the positive and watch your attitude change for the better.

Seek out people who understand your current situation and have encouraging words for you. Not everyone knows how to do this and may dash your plans without even realizing it. Many times these are people closest to us – family and friends who know us well and want what's easiest and least painful for us. What we know is best for us sometimes is not the easiest however, so we go back to what's comfortable because of the advice of loved ones. Someone recently asked me if she should tell everyone about her dream job she's working toward. As much as we would like to share our excitement, it's more important to look out for our plans and ideas and keep them carefully insulated, especially while they're in a fragile development stage. Find people outside your closest circle – those already working in jobs and companies you'd love to try, fellow job seekers in the reception areas of places you're applying and people in transition on online discussion groups. Find out what they're doing, how they got there, where they're headed, and what helpful suggestions they have to offer. Bounce your ideas and plans off of them and see what they think. Open up and ask. People are more willing to help than we realize and those who don't know us well can have the most objective, beneficial opinions.

One of the most powerful ways I know of to surround yourself with support is to join a group where people in transition gather to discuss their successes and challenges while learning how others are making progress. There's real power in a meeting of like minds and similar situations where everyone feels supported and uplifted to reach for their goals. Groups like this encourage each other to create visions and focus on what's important to each of them personally. The best

groups have no criticism or judgment of each other – only support and exchange of helpful ideas. I had the opportunity to see one of these groups in action recently. They each spoke briefly to the group about their backgrounds and target jobs, exchanged resumes, business cards, and most importantly, leads, referrals and ideas. For a room full of unemployed people, the overall feeling was one of utmost support and camaraderie.

Where to find these groups? There are online discussion boards where you can have a virtual group with people from any geographic location, informal discussions among friends and colleagues at someone's home or a coffee shop, or more formal groups with guest speakers and valuable tools and tips. Search the internet or form your own group and build that support system that will see you into a positive future.

So, who are you hanging out with and how are you spending your time? Look out for yourself, your goals and dreams and never give up on the work life you have in mind.

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