



*As with any competition, and job finding is certainly a competitive process, the person making the fewest mistakes tends to win the game!*

The following is a list of the twenty-seven (27) common mistakes made by untrained job seekers. Review this list and see if you're making any of these "correctable" mistakes.



### 1. They Lack A Realistic Career Objective

Too many applicants say they'll take "anything" when asked what type of job they want...they have no reinforceable or realistic career direction. This tells the employer three things. First, they haven't given much time to evaluating their skills and where they'll fit into the company. Secondly, "I'll do anything" people appear to lack decision-making skills and rely on others to make critical decisions for them...*just the kind of people employers don't want*. Finally, they appear desperate...*not a good negotiating posture*.

### 2. They Ask: "Are You Hiring?" or "Got Any Jobs?"

These are the three most destructive words in a job seeker's vocabulary...*since the normal response is "no."* Why would anyone want to ask a question that gives an employer a chance to react negatively. Offering something of value to the employer, before asking for something from them, seems to make a lot more sense. How about reframing the question to sound something like this: "*Would you like to talk to someone who does quality work, has a good performance record and does more than just their job?*"

### 3. They Don't See Things From The Employer's Perspective

Seeing the job search from your own perspective is considered knowledge...seeing it from the employer's is called understanding. As with every part of life...information is power. The job seeker who knows more about how employers recruit and select applicants tends to be the person who gets the best job offer...quicker!

### 4. They Aren't Creative, Take No Initiative or Take Little Risk

Nothing is more risky than long-term unemployment. That's why it seems so odd that people who say "they'll do anything to find a job" refuse to take any job finding risk. Two questions every job seeker has to answer are: "What am I willing to do to get the next job?" and "How creative and risk oriented am I willing to be?" Using creative methodologies results in the best job offers...quicker. *The greater the risk, the greater the reward!*

### 5. They Don't Do A Very Thorough Self-Assessment (what they can offer an employer)

Over 20 different types of information are needed for an adequate self-assessment. A thorough self-assessment should result in a person being able to identify what they have to offer an employer and what they want in return for their labor, skills and education. In the most simple form, a well prepared job seeker should be able to define no fewer than 60 marketable skills (what they can offer an employer) and they should have a good picture of what they consider the "ideal job" and compensation package.

### 6. They Don't Do Enough Research

The more you know about the company, its products/services, the job functions within that company and the trends in the field; the easier it is for you to find ways to meet the needs of the employer. In a perfect world, five types of research should be performed: #1 company research, #2 cultural research, #3 job-task-analysis research, #4 field & trend research and #5 peer research.

### 7. They Don't Find and Talk To Hiring Authorities

Always remember that the shortest distance between any two points IS NOT a straight line...its a short line. A straight line can go on forever. Job seekers need a very short line between them and the employer if they're to reduce the length of time they remain unemployed. The shortest lines in a job search are a handshake and a telephone line.



### 8. They Create Poorly Developed Job Search Tools

80% of all applicants are screened out at the paper level (*application, cover letters, resumes, etc.*). This being the case, job seekers need to spend the time developing screen resistant, attention getting job search tools, these include:

- Application forms
- Cover letters
- Resumes
- Skills summary cards
- Broadcast letters
- Thank you notes
- Telephone Scripts
- Portfolios
- Rejection follow up letters



### 9. They Use Too Few or Too Many Job Search Approaches

To paraphrase the three bears: “Too many, too few, just right!” People who rely on only one or two different job search strategies don’t seem to get enough positive results to keep their morale and energy level up. On the flip side, people trying to juggle too many strategies lose control of their search. They try to do too much at one time...and lose the quality of the search inside their activity. *Present quality not hyperactivity.*

### 10. They Mismanage Their Time & Search Activity

We all wake up with the same amount of hours in the day (*except for that last day*). The question is, “what are you doing with your 24 hours? A good job seeker understands that a job search is a 24 hour a day task. They need to manage, monitor and evaluate their job search activities, daily. Even more importantly, they realize the need to spend up to 60% of their time doing the grunt work: collecting, coordinating & organizing information and planning & completing projects. *Job seekers who learn to manage their job search time...waste less of it.*

### 11. They Do An Inadequate Job Of Preparing For The Interview

90% of the people who suffer from extended unemployment can’t answer even the most elemental of interview questions. This lack of preparation can be summed up two words: *really dumb!* Most people who try to wing the interview end up getting an equal return on their investment...nothing. Since employers are willing to pay good money (*called a job offer*) for solid answers to their questions, it just makes sense for a job seeker to spend the time and energy needed to improve their interviewing skills.

### 12. They Tend To Repeat The Same Mistakes..over and over

Many times a job seeker thinks they’re doing something right, when in fact, they may actually be hurting their chances for employment (*A good example are dislocated workers who haven’t looked for work for 25 years...they tend to use what worked 25 years ago.*). Job seekers need to keep abreast of the latest hiring trends and job search strategies. I advise attending any group job search training classes you can get into, joining job clubs or support groups (40+, church, etc.), talking with career professionals (public/private) and discussing emotional problems with social workers. All can be a big help.

### 13. They Rely Too Heavily On Employment Professionals & Employment Systems

*God helps those who help themselves!* There are over 144,000,000 people in the labor market and most of them found work without these systems or counselors. You should use these agencies, companies and career professionals as you need them...*but don’t put all of your eggs in their basket.* The bulk of a job search will still require effort, energy and commitment...from the job seeker...not the counselor.

### 14. They Fear Networking & Making Cold Contacts

Virtually every research report on job finding indicates that networking and direct contact to a hiring authority are the two best ways of finding job leads and getting job offers. The more successful job seeker will have between 400 - 800 people in their network. In fact, one research study indicates that 25% of dislocated workers had over 1,000 in their job search network. Job seekers must learn how to develop and utilize their network.

### 15. They Don’t Follow Up...Lack Persistence

Job seekers complain that they don’t know where they stand after they’ve completed an application form, sent a resume or went to an interview. Most employers say the applicant doesn’t do a very good job of following up after they’ve completed an application form, sent a resume or went to an interview. *Same problem, different perspectives.* Sophisticated job seekers know how to close an interview, follow-up with thank you notes, answer requests for additional information and keep themselves in the mind’s eye of the employer.



### 16. They Don't Have A Daily Action Plan...They Wait, Hope & Pray

In a job search, good things don't happen to those who wait! Good things happen to those who make things happen. *Proactivity & action orientation* are two keys to reducing the length of time a person remains unemployed. There has always been an inverse relationship between the amount of time and energy invested in a job search and the length of time a person remains unemployed.



### 17. They Come On Too Strong or Too Weak

Job seekers must walk a *confidence, style & class tightrope*. Being “pushy” without exuding class and style is a deadly mistake for a job seeker. On the other side, not being confident enough, poised and persistent (*a little pushy with class and style*) can also be a problem. Successful job seekers can present solid accomplishment statements, without appearing like they're bragging, if they can back up everything they say they can do.

### 18. They Handle Rejection Poorly

It's not unusual for a person to have between 20-40 interviews before getting the job they want, at a dollar value consistent with their skills. This means a lot of *rejection shock* takes place in any job search. Job seekers have a choice. They can wallow in self-pity, become depressed and dysfunctional or they can learn from each rejection experience...and realize that the “yes” every job seeker wants is at the end of the string of no's.

### 19. They Missequence Their Job Search Activities

Doing the right thing, right is fine but doing the right thing, right...at the appropriate time is even more valuable. Successful job seekers don't get trapped in crisis responses, they act according to a well thought out plan.

Examples: *Before looking for work, you need to determine the type of work you want.*

*Before completing any job search tools, you need to do a thorough skills assessment.*

*Before completing a resume, you need to determine the resume format best for you.*

*Before going to an interview, you should practice interview skills and do research.*

### 20. Poor Job Search Activity Management & Tracking

Document, document, document is the mantra of successful job seekers. Successful job seekers log every move they make, such as: network contacts, research contacts, application forms completed, resumes sent, thank you letters delivered, interviews generated & the types of questions asked at those interviews, phone contacts made...and much more. By keeping this type of information, job seekers can reevaluate their search strategies. *If something (ex: sending out hundreds of resumes, without getting interviews) seems to not be working, change it.*

### 21. They Think There's A Set Of Labor Market Rules

There are no rules in the labor market. The labor market is a fluid, inconsistent, often strange place. Job finding is more of art form vs. a science or a discipline. What worked one place may not work at the next. This fact implies that the “creative” job seeker has a leg-up on those who lack that creativity.

### 22. They Believe Labor Market Myths

Too many job seekers have little or no information about how the labor market really operates. Because of this they fall prey to many of the myths that permeate the world of work. A few examples of these myths include:

- *You have to start at human resources.*
- *Most companies don't check references.*
- *Employers won't negotiate salary.*
- *1000 resumes guarantees a good job offer.*
- *A company's first offer is their last offer.*
- *Temporary work rarely leads to full time work.*

### 23. They're Inflexible...Won't Travel, Relocate or Work Different Shifts

*Sometimes you've got to go to where the food is and sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do.* One of the quickest ways to expand employment opportunities is to expand the radius of the job search. In today's world it's not abnormal for people to commute 2 hours or more.



#### 24. They Look For Openings vs. Opportunities

*The labor market is in a perpetual state of flux.* There are more people working today than yesterday and there will be more working tomorrow than today. Every day people quit, get fired, go back to school, get pregnant, leave town, new companies start, employers expand, etc. Because of these factors, *employers are always on the lookout for good workers.*

Successful job seekers understand this and find ways to apply to companies where they want to work...even if there are no posted openings. People who only look for openings are in competition with everyone who knows the job is posted. People who look for opportunities are in competition with no one.



#### 25. They Underestimate The Competitive Nature of a Job Search

Finding that next job has a lot of similarities to any other contest.

- Both require you to compete...sometimes against friends.
- Both require the development and utilization of new sets of skills.
- Both require social graces in losing & winning.
- Both require that the competitor understand the rules of the game.
- Both require individuals to take some level of risk to win.
- Both require a mental and physical commitment.
- The person making the fewest mistakes tends to win the game.
- Both require the demonstration of aggressive behaviors.
- Both have only one winner (in a job search it's the person getting the job offer).

#### 26. They Leap, Then Look

Many job seekers jump into the job search traffic without looking both ways...and are run over by the unemployment truck. They don't have the right types of information, tools or support to keep their motivation high and their successes frequent. The resultant impact of this "leap then look" behavior is higher job search frustration:

- Poor self-assessments don't generate screen resistant job search tools.
- Poor job search tools don't generate interviews.
- Poor interview skills don't generate job offers.
- Poor negotiation strategies don't generate higher incomes.

#### 27. Their Appearance Is Incongruous or Inappropriate

Right or wrong, first impression is a factor in the hiring process. A job seeker must look like they can do the job, act like they can do the job, write like they can do the job and talk like they can do the job.

**The Principle Guarantor of Job Search Success  
Is Aggressive Job Search Behavior!**