

Finding a Job, Can It Get Any Harder!

How Networking and Preparation Can Give You
the Leg Up You Need.

H. Kim

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About The Authors

H. Kim has been up and down the corporate ladder so much, he's on first name basis with each rung. Which is a good thing, because it lets him use all the successes, and more importantly, the mistakes, he's made in his blog, "Landing On Your Feet: A Help You Find a Job Blog."

With nearly 40 years of work experience, H. Kim has done or worked the following:

- President of an Korean Import Company
- Country Manager for a Multi-National Corporation
- International Marketing Manager
- Small Business Owner
- A "Big Box" Retail Manager
- US Army Veteran

In that time, H. Kim has learned a great deal about networking, job search strategies, and now, sharing that knowledge with you.

Hopefully, this knowledge will help you.

For more comments and an occasional pearl of wisdom, come on over to www.LandingOnYourFeet.com.

Share your thoughts, share your comments.

Best regards,

H. Kim

Introduction

Welcome to my little eBook. Within this eBook, my goal is to share some of what I have learned. We will discuss networking as really the only way to finding a great job. Of course, if you must, and there are no other avenues, I will share my thoughts on job fairs, specifically finding and exploiting niche job fairs.

And I will also talk about how to make a great impression throughout your job search efforts by examining the following three areas:

- Crafting a Killer, Elevator Speech
- Great Interview Preparation
- The Follow-Up

Lastly, I will discuss what is more important, your cover letter/resume or the path you are on.

Hopefully, it will be good and useful information. If you have additional comments or interested in what else I have to say, come on over to www.LandingOnYourFeet.com.

It's just a little website with some information, a few pithy sayings, and hopefully, a laugh or two.

Networking, Or Just Get Out There!

Let us begin by stating the obvious. Networking is a key, if not absolutely critical, component to your job hunt strategy. Those who have signed up for my newsletter know that a common thread that runs through the 5 best ways to find a job is networking, whereas a theme present in the 5 worst ways is really trying to do it all in a cocoon, by yourself.

I should note that there is nothing wrong with trying to do something yourself. After all, the high point of personal, self discipline is independence. But, I like Dr. Covey's concept that "interdependence" is the next level beyond independence. "Interdependence" is synergy in action and application. This is networking. It is using and contributing to each other's success. It is the win-win scenario. Networking!

And as discussed in the previous blog, it is all about knowing how to network properly. Because it means face to face networking. In today's environment of LinkedIn and Facebook, etc., sometimes we forget that the fundamental principle is face to face. Sure it might be more comfortable doing it online where our body language and tone of voice are not being evaluated, but you miss out on the huge opportunity that comes from shaking hands and connecting on deeper, more personal level.

Yes, face to face, but it is also important to understand the networking venue in which you find yourself. In other words, know the etiquette and dress codes that are the unspoken standards for the environment you want to be a part of. It may be okay to wear a pair of jeans and a sports jacket to a casual get-together type, evening networking club, but to a Chamber of Commerce meeting, you will probably need to wear a more business like attire. Pay just as much attention to your dress for these networking opportunities as you do for any interviews that you attend. Why? Because you may very well be meeting your future employer at these meetings.

Be an active member in the organizations in which you attend. Go to every meeting with the goal of meeting new people and initiating new contacts. This is particularly important. And, you will find, if you do not already know, that the rules for networking at these meetings spill over to networking at the barbershop, at library or any other public place.

Remember to always carry contact information with you. If you do not have a current business card then have them made. There are several places that will do 250 business cards free of charge when you pay for shipping and handling. Vista Print is one online store that provides this service. Or use something like Microsoft Publisher and make your own.

Be creative on these cards so that you are memorable. They should be formatted to the standard landscape orientation and should be of standard size. Why? Make it easy on the people you give it to. The last thing you want is for someone to try and put your card in their wallet, find it is too big and tosses it. A standard size business card. It is what is on it that matters, not the weird size or shape of it. And yet, some will continue to think different is better. And lastly, they irritate some people who find this type of creativity bothersome.

But if you are a creativity person, let your creativity be evident in the content and the artwork on the card. If your field is design or art related, then let that shine through in your card. As for the nitty gritty, content should not only include the standard contact information such as phone, address, email and fax but also consider including a mission statement, list of accomplishments or quotation that communicates your business perspective and goals. In other words, it is not a business card; it is really a calling card to remember you by. Obviously, only so much you can put on a business card – use both sides!

When you approach people, be yourself. To state the obvious, but business people do react best to individuals who have personality and the confidence to be themselves. Unless being you means getting drunk and dancing on the tables then do not be yourself. Pretend you are a bold, visionary entrepreneur instead. Or rethink your career choice or your desire to communicate everything about who you are to anyone who cares to listen. Okay.

Good managers and companies recognize that creative, innovative and strong leaders have a personality and are not drones. Do not be a drone.

When you are talking with people you have just met, share a story, a kind word or suggestion that makes you memorable. Whether interacting at these networking meetings, socializing at the gym or meeting at the library we all meet more people than we can remember. Make yourself memorable by telling that interesting story or offering helpful suggestions.

You can improve your chances of being remembered if you approach someone with what you can do for them and not what they can do for you. Remember that old expression that “you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar”? It holds true here too. Give something to someone and they are likely to want to reciprocate and that can lead to a job interview or introduction.

Point that I am hammering away at is, be memorable, but memorable for all the right reasons. Mentioned earlier, but the people you network with may well be looking at you and subconsciously evaluating you as a potential workmate or employee - heck, it could be a conscious evaluation, even better.

Lastly, to reiterate, always be mindful that it is a give and take. Synergy means you must also contribute to the networking efforts of other. It is the ultimate, “scratch your back, scratch my back.” Did you notice the wording; “scratch your back” came first. Good Luck.

The Killer Intro (Or What's an Elevator Speech?)

You walk into an elevator, you are the only one in it, then the gal/guy who lives 2 flights up (that you've wanted to meet) gets on. Quick, say something! You say, "Uh, hi, uh, my name is Jack, and uh, you live up stairs, uh..." Door opens, the gal/guy runs for her/his life. And you just want to take the walk of shame.

You are at a chamber of commerce networking event, across from you is the CEO of your "dream company." What do you do? What do you say?

Quick, there's the woman who you know can get you in for that interview. What do you do? What do you say?

So, what the heck is an elevator speech? Well, it's a quick 15 to 30 second introductory statement of yourself. Some call it an elevator speech, because if you ran into someone in an elevator, you do not have much time to get your point across. Obviously, you will use this micro statement in a whole lot of other places than in an elevator, but you get the point, right.

Fact is, whatever you call it, it is an important networking tool for marketing yourself, breaking the ice with people you meet or making a run for those opportunities before the others get to it. Think of it as a sound bite, a movie trailer for someone to remember you by, and intrigued enough to want to see the whole movie (you). So, the initial principle is a sound bite that is clear, concise, informative and engaging. Got all that. The goal is not to lay yourself bare on the first contact but, again, offer up a movie trailer of you.

Really, having a prepared elevator speech with you at all times, like a business card – another networking tool, is more about you than anything else. Having a well rehearsed, introductory statement that you can whip up on anyone is such a huge confidence builder. If you are in an elevator and that dream gal/guy walks in, wow, knowing what to say and to say it with confidence is huge. Here's the other thing, when you are actively in the job market, everyone – everyone – is 6 degrees away from your dream job. Having the speech, business card (see earlier article), ready is crucial.

So, as you prepare your elevator speech, you do need to consider a few things. First and foremost, it must sound effortless and natural. It has to sound conversational. Write a brief statement that you think works and then practice, practice, practice. You practice in front of the mirror, to your friends, to your mentor. Key is not so much to memorize it, as it is to know it. To know it backwards and sideways and forwards. It has to sound natural. The person listening has to say, this one is speaking to me!

As we talked about previously regarding business cards, your micro speech has to be memorable, and in this case, also sincere. Let this brief statement give your listener a peek-a-boo look into

your personality. Write and rewrite, practice and refine. First time, your statement might be one or two minutes long. That is okay. Just practice, refine, practice, refine. What is verbose; what is not necessary; what really is not going to be important to the listener (maybe important to you, though), seek counsel.

When it is showtime, have confidence in what you have been practicing. Visualize confidence. Visualize getting a positive reaction to your micro statement. And if you get a little nervous or feel a few butterflies fluttering about in your gut, that is okay. That is probably normal. You are at a network event, everyone is probably feeling the same, but who is prepared. Visualize success.

Make eye contact. Smile. Extend that hand and shake with a “firm” grip. Speak slowly, stop for natural breaks in the conversation. And, by the way, if the conversation goes well, cut it short. Excuse yourself, set up time to get together later. Leave them wanting more, not you be desperate. And if the interest is not there, just excuse yourself politely and leave. Do not waste your time or theirs.

By the way, this works for cold calling. I will talk more about this in a later article, but by all means, this is a perfect time to use your elevator speech. Especially, if you have to leave a voicemail. Practice, come across natural. Why you are calling, how you would benefit him or her, how you are the solution to his or her problem and asking for a call back.

Lastly, your elevator or micro statement must end with a call to action. If you do not, then this whole exercise was for naught.

One other thing, every situation is different and you must have the wherewithal to adapt your speech to the circumstance you find yourself in. If you practice and refine and practice and refine, then this will not be a problem, as you will know what needs to be said backwards and forwards.

In short, having an elevator speech can only help improve your chances for getting that job you want. So, I urge to develop one now, if you have not already done so.

Take a Break, Now and Then

Some days – you just have to take a break. And that is hard. Being unemployed, or about to be unemployed, or thinking you might be unemployed soon – man – the last thing you want to do is take a break. But brother, or sister, you just have to.

I know days seem to slip on by, like sand through an hour glass. And after a few months, the sand moves faster, does it not seem? I am not trying to discourage you. The point is days will go by regardless of what you do. And if you do nothing but job hunt and job hunt, you will burn yourself out and maybe your family too.

In previous post and articles, I have talked about daily renewal. I have talked about Dr. Covey's teachings on "sharpening the saw," that is, taking care of the goose, so the goose (you) can continue to lay those golden eggs. Every day, you need to do 30 minutes of physical exercise; read a meaningful book for 15 to 20 minutes a day; and for your mental well-being, spend time with your family or social group – bond and connect.

Start a hobby. While you are networking, researching, typing, reading, calling, and everything else that you do, start a hobby. I am going to give you a hobby. Wine. I love wine. I have been a wine geek for a very long time. Wine is such a great thing to get into. (By the way, there is an ulterior motive, right).

I actually decided to write about wines because someone (today) told me that his wife wanted to start drinking red wines. She had been drink whites but felt it time to try reds. So, he asked for some advice on how best approach red wines. Actually it is a really good question. If you know red wines, than you know that the range of "drinkable" reds for beginners is quite narrow. After all, the last thing, you want to recommend is a "big" California Cabernet Sauvignon with 14.5% alcohol.

Guaranteed, the newbie's will never drink red again. And it is pricey!

So, here was my recommendation. Start with a Gallo Hearty Burgundy. No laughing here! Gallo Hearty Burgundy has always been a great place to start because it has moderate tannins with a touch of acidity which gives it a smooth, balance finish. That is key. A very tannic wine is like sucking on a tree bark. It is like having cotton mouth in the morning. It is not a very pleasant sensation for the beginners.

And price is important. Starting out and experimenting means starting with affordable wines. A place to start could be a Beaujolais Villages, but here in Hawaii, that goes for 14 to 15 bucks. Gallo Hearty Burgundy is under 5 bucks. Beaujolais' are a light red wine with refreshing acidity and a touch of tannins for body. It has nice floral aromas, and most beginners probably would not taste the red berries in the wine. But, it is three times the cost of a Hearty Burgundy. Start cheap.

From there, move on to mostly Merlots, before moving to Blends, and lastly to either Cabernets or Syrahs. The progression follows the levels of tannins and acids. Beginners do better with lower tannins with some acidity. As the taste develops, then the progression is to higher levels of tannins and lower levels of acids.

Alcohol tends to reinforce the tannic feel of red wine, so for beginners – the start point is lower levels, say around 10 to 11 %. Again, as the taste develops, you would move gradually toward higher alcohol content wines. Of course, I have never been that crazy about these 14 to 15 % alcohol reds from California. I mostly drink wines with dinner and there is a reason why European wines tend to level out at 12%. You do not want the alcohol to dominate your taste buds.

Depending on the prices in your area, you could go from Merlots to an Italian Dolcetto d'Alba or even a Bordeaux blend like Chateau Parenchere or Chateau Ricaud (both should about 14 bucks or so).

Now, here is what could happen. You start drinking some Gallo Hearty Burgundy. It runs about 3 or 4 bucks, not too bad, and decent bottle to boot. And you think, hey, that shelf talker on that wine says that it is an Australian Shiraz Cabernet. It says that the wine is fruity with moderate tannins and fun to drink. Sounds a bit like what Jack recommends. And it is not too expensive, about 4 or 5 bucks. So you take home and have it with pork chops.

There is a wine tasting at the local wine shop on Tuesday night. 25 Bucks and you get to taste 10 to 15 different bottles, or it might even be free. So you go and taste a few bottles, interesting – you meet new people. How is that elevator speech coming along?

You find out about other wine tasting nights. Could be a good way to build your network, meet new people.

And here is a prejudice view. Most people that really enjoy wine tend to be educated and employed. I could be wrong. They have some degree of connection to the business world. I could be wrong. Or I could be right. It is all very moot, though. Because I am suggesting that you start a hobby, if you do not already have one.

I am giving you an example of how to start enjoying red wines, assuming you are not familiar with wines.

I am also suggesting that a byproduct of learning wines can result in some quality network possibilities. In fact, whether you start attending wine tastings or join a local jogging group or a local job support group or start playing chess or whatever it may be, do so because you want to be a part of that group, and let the networking flow naturally from that. Some real possibilities.

Again, it can be anything. And the networking is a natural extension of you learning or seeking out a new hobby. Because, if you do nothing but job search, if you lose sight of the forest, if you

lose sight of what is most important – your well-being and your family, then you may lose more than your job.

Take care of yourself.

Niche Job Fair

Two Clichés stick out in my mind. First, is "doing the same things over and over again - expecting a different result - is the definition of insanity. Second one is "thinking outside the box." We live in world of clichés and acronyms. So, I've been trying to cut down on using them, yet, these two do resonate with me. So, I thought I'd chat about these two sayings for a bit and how it relates to job hunt strategies.

Most folks, I think, tend to approach job hunt with two basic strategic thoughts:

Offline - Use the Sunday Help Wanted as start point. Respond to ads, attend job fairs, and wait. To supplement, check out job centers or local/state employment offices for job postings or openings. Take night courses perhaps, improve on some skills or add new ones. Head to local chamber of commerce, try to source out some new leads. Contact alumni, if applicable and attend networking events, if available. So, these are some of what job seekers do offline (that's without internet for the computer challenged among us)

Online - Monster.com, career.com, and the rest of the "any job portal.com." Post resumes, post more resumes, wait, wait, post more resumes. I understand that people do get jobs through the internet; I just have not met a whole lot of them.

Interesting detour, read an article on CNN-Money about resumes disappearing into a black hole. One of the people interviewed claimed she sent out over 500 resumes and no response. She was desperate for a response, good, bad, or indifferent. She'll wait a while longer, I think. One of the "experts" felt the issue was the tremendous availability of resume producers and online mechanisms that allow people to flood recruiters and HR folks with hundreds more resumes per posting than in the past. Makes sense. With a click of button, not unreasonable to think that one could send out hundreds of resumes quickly via email or job portal. Beats licking stamps I suppose.

Are we insane yet? Time to think outside the box? Tired of being a cliché?

I'm going to share with you some of what I've done in the past that were successful. I essentially took a conventional approach and just went deeper.

Doing the same thing inside a box would be going to every job fair that rolls into town and handing out a stack of resumes. This is a step better than mailing out or blasting hundreds emails to whatever company via the help wanted, offline or online. Still, you do get to see a human being. Nevertheless, your chances of success are slim. See my first ezine. But that said, job fairs can be most effective!

So, the last job fair I went to - went like this. I have prior military experience. This is critical for me, because it's my alumni. You have yours, be college, high school, vocational school, guys

you hung out with at the street corner, mechanic, any group or association that you are remotely tied to, can be your alumni. And there are fairs that target those alumni. And that is huge. Not a generic job fair advertised in the Sunday paper. Not a retail giant's grand opening job fair. But a job fair for professional nurses, a job fair for HVAC engineers.

Recruiters at a generic job fairs are fishing, collecting resumes, hoping for the best. Recruiters at an alumni job fair are focused. This is the fundamental difference. What am I talking about? Really, I'm talking about working your niche. Are you working your niche right now? Because these fairs may or may not be in the paper. You have to find them, in professional journals, associations, online and so forth.

So, my niche was military. So, I began sourcing every military job fair in the US. That's right, I lived in Florida at the time, and I sourced every job fair that targeted the military in the US. And of course, this is the unparalleled value of the internet. This kind of research was just not possible 20 years ago when I left the army. Use the internet for research and leave the broadcasting of resumes to others.

Once I had every military job fair several months into the future, I made a list of all the companies attending plus where same companies were attending multiple events.

I researched every company, departments within companies, subsidiaries, names where I could. As I started the research, it became clear to me that the companies that interested me the most were attending the fairs' farthest away from me. Ain't it always the case. The potentially profitable fairs were held in places like DC, Boston, and San Diego. But really, the locations were not important. What was important were the companies that interested me and where the research was leading me.

My research actually lead me to a potentially good job fair in Austin, Texas. Living in Orlando, Florida, for me to head to a job fair in the middle of Texas, to drop off a few resumes did not seem like a great idea at first blush. At second blush, tight on money - with a one and half year old growing fast - the thought was just plain nutty.

Still, the standard job fair, the online applications, the Sunday help wanted, the yellow pages, and rest were not working me (do they work for you?), so after much discussion with my wife, we decided to give going to Austin a shot. Even after paying the registration fee and setting some money aside, the closer the date came, the greater and more intense the doubts became. On budget, a tight budget, I decided to drive to Austin. 1,100 plus miles. The thought I would drive 20 hours to drop off a few resumes and drive back home was torture, for me.

But for me, thinking outside the box was research and analysis. It was understanding why I doing it versus, hey, wow, a job fair at the convention, let's go. And it was not succumbing to paralysis by analysis. It meant having trust in the research, it mean having trust in the preparation and then making a decision and committing to it.

To cut to the chase, showed up at the job fair with resumes in hand, backed by solid research and analysis of which companies I wanted to meet. Had 5 or so onsite interviews (approached 8

companies I think). Went back the next morning for follow-up interviews. After I got home, a few days later, I spoke with them again. Two of companies invited to meet with them again, one flying me to Chicago and the other to Maryland. The job fair was November 8th, by mid-December; I received a written job offer from the company in Maryland which I took. Worked out well.

Gotta tell you though, on the drive home, I was exhausted. Pulled over at a rest area near the Louisiana and Mississippi border around 1am and snoozed in my car for about 5 hours. Woke up, got out, stretched, looked around and saw about 3 dozen other folks doing the same thing. We all chuckled and waved, seemed funny at the time.

Main takeaways

1. Niche, niche, niche
2. Research and Analysis
3. Go where it leads you
4. Decide on the merits of your research and analysis
5. Trust in your decision abilities and commit to your decision
6. Go and take your best shot, knowing you prepared well.

This for me is thinking outside the box. Because if you just keep going to the latest job fair at the closest convention or hotel with a stack of resume, the results probably won't be much different.

Good Luck

Blowing the Doors Off the Interview

How many people do you suppose go into an interview with solutions to the challenges that your prospective company is facing? Or the challenges that the person conducting the interview is facing? Now having solutions would presuppose that one also knows what those challenges are. Yet imagine, how powerful the interview presentation would be if one knew the challenges and had the solutions going into an interview. What kind of leg up would that give you?

Knowing what the challenges are.

Well, we have talked before about the virtues of applying for a job through the help wanted or online postings versus jobs identified through networking and research. Well, that discussion is not relevant here. Because regardless of which avenue you took to get the interview, you have gotten the interview. Congratulations. Now a whole new phase of work begins. Once an interview is set, you need to go into research overdrive, but you knew that, right?

During this research, you need to do a business analysis. As best as you can, you are going to look at the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. For the interview preparation, you are going to really focus on the last two. The opportunities and threats that the organization, or department, is facing.

As for the strengths and weaknesses, that knowledge will be helpful but during an interview, it seems to me that hitting on strengths would be gratuitous and spending time going over an organization's weaknesses self-defeating.

Understanding the opportunities and the threats, though, can demonstrate that you are forward thinking and a solutions-based individual. And that is what you want.

So, what is your solution?

Here is what the interviewer is going to love hearing. Your solutions. But not some pie in the sky imaginings. You must have a solid and reasonable 30 – 60 – 90 day plan to address the opportunities and threats that your potential employer is facing or will face. A 90 day plan that you preface by stating the obvious, which is that the 90 day plan is based on what you know as an outsider.

The key is not that you have an implementable plan, but that you want to demonstrate your skills at analyzing and synthesizing data; thought process in looking ahead; and ability to bring it together and create an actionable plan. Your interviewer will love it. You immediately bring value with you.

It is not you looking for a job with hat in hand. The interviewer does not hold the keys to your wildest dreams. You are both on equal footing looking, examining, imagining how mutually

beneficial it would be to bring you on board. But you must bring value. Your past is your past. And as they say in investments, past performance is no guarantee of future success.

Unless, you walk in with a solid 30 – 60 – 90 day plan that speaks to the potential employer's opportunities and threats. Backed with a past record of success, you start to look like a winner and sure bet to the interviewer.

That's the ticket!

The Follow-Up

One of most serious mistakes a job seeker can make is to ignore the follow-up. In almost any endeavor, it is the follow-up that seals the “deal.” It is the follow-up that sets the winners apart from the losers.

When I ran the 100 yd dash in high school, my track coach drilled me to run like it was the 110 yard dash. So many kids ran the 100 yards and actually began pulling up at around the 97 or 98 yard mark, or so it seemed.

Regardless of how the interview went, do not pull up at the 97 or 98 yard mark. Because once the interview is over, you still have more work to do. Now is not the time to sit passively and wait for the job offer to come to you. You must still go to it. And in doing so, you will set yourself leagues apart from your competitors.

If you took some of my other articles into consideration, than you would have done serious research prior to the interview. You should have done a business analysis, as best as you could. You would have done a SWOT assessment of the company, as best as you could. You would have developed a list of question from which to carry on a discussion with your interviewer.

The key, without being arrogant or presumptive, is to “interview” the interviewer, as much as you are being interviewed. And never mind how desperate you are, the interviewer does not need to know that (even if he or she does!). Which in the end allows you to assist in bringing the interview to a conclusion.

You conclude by confirming their contact information. You conclude by asking for a timeline of events after the interview. Before you walk out, you must know what will happen next. It can be as simple as asking for a business card and the number of days before being contacted, one way or the other. But ask. Make it a two way discussion.

As soon as you leave the site, head to a coffee shop and write a thank you note while the interview is still fresh in your head. Or do it in the parking lot. Do it with a fresh memory. In fact, take blank “thank you” cards with you to the interview. Write a thank note to everyone you meet, from the receptionists to the interviewer (that is right, collect a lot of business cards).

The thank you needs to be very simple and brief. To everyone but the interviewer, just thank, perhaps mention something nice and a hope to see you again, two or three lines at most. To the interviewer, also state that you look to hearing from him or her within whatever time he or she gave you, three or four lines at most. And yes, you will write it out. You will hand write the address and mail it immediately. If the postal system works, your recipients will get it the next day.

Wow, your interviewer will get a handwritten thank you from you the next day. How many of your competitor, do you think will do that? I think the numbers will be low. I think you put yourself in the top tier by doing this.

By the way, you send the thank you regardless of how the interview went or whether you want the job or not. If it is the latter, then this exercise becomes a networking opportunity. If it is the former, it is perhaps an opportunity to redeem yourself (probably no chance, but again, a networking opportunity). It is always a good thing to demonstrate good business etiquette.

On a side note, some have suggested sending it via email or hand deliver or just making sure that you send it through the “correct” avenue. I have no idea what the “correct” avenue is. I believe in mailing immediately, addressed to the person.

And I believe a handwritten letter is best. It is personal and it is warm. If you have poor penmanship, my only advice is to practice and write carefully. This is your livelihood on the line. Write the letter grammatically correct with no misspellings. A reason for keeping the letter brief and simple is to avoid sending a poorly written thank you note that has the interviewer thinking ill of you.

If you made mention of references and provided the means for the interviewer to contact your references, call them, if you have not already done so, and give them a heads up. Let us make sure that what you have claimed is what they will back you up on.

Within the next couple of days, sit down with a member of your support team, whether a friend or mentor, and recap the interview. Assess your performance. Where did you do well? What did you do well? And the reverse, what were the missed opportunities? To me, this is critical moment and a critical exercise. This is the path to improving your performance.

If the interview went well and this is a company you want to work for, then it is time to do more research into the company and its business. Turn it inside out. During the interview, you should have garnered some good information. Use it to build a better picture of what this company is all about.

If the interviewer stated that he or she would contact you in 5 days but does not, then on day 7, contact him or her and politely ask what your status is. And mention, “Oh by the way, how are you guys responding to the “xyz” change to your industry? Is it a good thing?” Politely, and with open-ended, leading questions, finagle yourself a 5 minute follow-up interview. 5 minutes, no more.

There may be all kinds of good reasons for the late contact – read nothing into it – unless they tell they are not interested. After you get off the phone, guess what you are going to send him or her. You are actively keeping the lines of communication open.

Assume the worst and you do not make the cut. Whether after the first interview or the third, they chose someone else. Guess what you do? Write a thank note. This time, type it out and

among the points to reiterate are your appreciation for the opportunity to meet; a request that you be consider for any openings matching someone of your skill level and experience, or to forward you to someone who might be in need of your skills or experience.

Lastly, write a thank you letter to the first person that got the ball rolling with all same points as you wrote to the last person you interviewed with. Job opportunity is gone, now you are in full networking mode. Always leave on a good note.

They say we are all six degrees of separation from someone famous. Well, you are six degrees away from a job. The people you just finished interviewing with could be in that chain of degrees.

What's More Important

Cover Letters are, oh, so important – as are resumes, of course. In fact, it is so important; job seekers spend up to several hundred dollars to have a cover letter, or resume, written for them. Yet, with all the challenges facing the newly unemployed, I have always wondered what is hype and what is truly needed in finding a job. I would never dispute the importance and the impact that a well written cover letter and/resume can have in finding employment.

Having said that, I found one site selling a basic package (cover letter, resume, thank you, etc.) that started at \$375 and more comprehensive packages that went all the way to \$700. There are other sites that charge upwards of \$300 just for a resume or a cover letter. Of course, there are writers who do not have a published pricing structure; you need to contact him or her for a personalized quote.

But let us not be penny wise and pound foolish, if they succeed in helping you get a job, it would all be worth it. After all, a \$60,000/year job equals to \$2,400,000 after 40 years, so what is a couple of hundred bucks?

Before reading this article, you were just broke and unemployed. Now, you are depressed on top of that, because who has 700 bucks to get a resume or cover letter professionally written. Hey, chin up; this is not why I am writing this article. Truth be told, you can write a very effective cover letter and/or resume at your local library. Your only cost would be the price to print a page at your library and your time.

But, if you have been unemployed for a while, despite your best efforts, a cover letter and resume are probably the least of your challenges. Because cover letters and resumes are some of the tools that you need, but not all. In fact, during segments of your job search, they are just downright irrelevant. So, for the time being, hold onto your hard earned cash and read on!

Here is an analogy (I am stealing this from Dr. Covey; I hope he does not mind). Say that you are lost. You have a great map and but it just is not helping. Why not? Could it be that you are driving around in Detroit with a map of Chicago. Or my personal analogy, having a great cover letter or resume without the right plan is like buying 10 lottery tickets instead of one. Your chances of hitting the lottery just went up by a factor of 10X. Whether you actually hit the lottery, well, do you want to bet your job on that?

Before you begin contemplating how to structure and what to put on your cover letter, you must answer the following:

- What am I good at?
- What have I done to demonstrate this?
- What do I want to do?
- Where do I want to do this?

- What is the minimum I will accept to do this, where I want to do this?

The answers must be detailed, must be well thought out, and the answers must come first in your job search. So, take a few days, and begin brainstorming these questions and begin putting the answers on paper. I am big into having a support team, and a job support team needs to have a mentor or trusted friend as an honest broker. Make an appointment and review all your answers with such a person.

I am also big into going where the research leads. One of great benefits to living in the United States has always been one's ability to move anywhere in this country on a dime's notice. No visa's required, no passport required, nothing! Heck, if need be, just jump in car or a greyhound bus and go.

You are a carpenter in Virginia and the construction market goes belly up. You have the option of packing things up and heading to Arizona, if your research tells you the jobs are there. Would that be a smart move? Would that be a realistic move? Only you and your research can answer those questions. But to know the answers, you must at a minimum tackle the above 5 questions.

But spending time on those questions can reveal more than what you can or could put on a resume. It can reveal that what you want to do is not what you have been doing. Wow! Remember; go where your research takes you. What if you have been an auto parts salesman and what you really are good at is coaching or teaching. In fact, you have been successful, because you have been teaching the benefits what you sell to your clients – not selling. Wow!

Do you stay an auto parts salesman or do you seek a profession where you can be a coach or a teacher? The next question might be a coach or teacher of what? Spend quality time on those questions before anything else.

Once you have done a critical analysis of yourself, you can begin to map out a strategy of how to get a job. And some of the strategies you can use are:

- Cold calling
- Join a Job support group
- Network with community centers and alumni
- Employ the 6 degrees of separation theory and contact everyone
- Niche Job Fairs

The objective in any strategy is to identify the one person who can hire you. That one person will not be an HR personnel, but it may be a department manager, or an owner. An owner, why yes, an owner. Here is the beauty of first doing research, and then working a strategic plan based on the research. The beauty is that it may lead you to want to work for a small business and most decision makers in a small business are the owners. No HR, no screener, move straight pass "go", collect your \$200, and meet with the decision maker.

Once you have identified the decision maker, now is the time to break out that awesome cover letter with or without an equally awesome resume. What to put in a cover letter, how to write a

cover letter is not really what is important here. If you have done the research, have identified the decision maker, then the cover letter should write itself. Why?

During your research, you will have unearthed the following information or answers to what needs to go into a cover letter:

- Address cover letter to a specific person – the decision maker.
- State why you are writing – you found out through networking what the decision maker needs.
- State why you can help – go back to first set of questions.
- State how you can help with proof – again, back to first set of questions.
- Ask to meet.

That is what goes into a cover letter. You have done all work, the letter should write itself. But if it does not, there is a plethora of writers and/or software's out there that can help. The price, as mentioned earlier, run from nothing to a lot.

As to what is worth what, that would be up to you and your confidence in your writing abilities. If your confidence is lacking or you really want a stellar letter to send and you do not have several hundred dollars, then look to a software or template program for 30 or 40 bucks. If that is not in reach or you deem unnecessary, there are plenty of free resources out there like Microsoft, or just do a search on “cover letter samples.”

When all is said and done, the most important tool in getting hired is the knowledge that resides between your ears and not what is written on a paper in front of you.