

10 ways to get a new job

Due to the recession, there are now more applications than ever before for every job, so it's vital that you stand out from the crowd. Here, career coach Denise Taylor tells you how

1 ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

When Julie Weston, 36, a training consultant, was made redundant, she realised that it presented an opportunity for her to go into something new. I spoke to Julie about her previous jobs, which ranged from bar work to selling computer services, and discovered that she was keen to move into sales work in a large firm. With that in mind, I helped her to adapt her CV to put more emphasis on her sales skills, and highlight how her training experience could back that up.

ACTION

Tailor your CV to each job you apply for, to make clear just how relevant your experience is to that job.

2 GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER

Carla Lawrence, 39, has always been super-organised (and previous bosses have always praised this strength), but she's found it hard to keep on top of things while being at home with three children under 10! What she needs is fast and easy access to her CVs, certificates and references, as well as a system for keeping track of job advertisements, her applications and research, interviews and follow-ups. It's unlikely that Carla – or any of us – will get the first job we go for and each application will often cover generally similar ground. Keeping copies of everything you write means you can recycle the information and

use it again, saving you time in the future. Job hunting can easily take over your whole life, so the more you can organise yourself, the more time you'll have for other things. Being 'between jobs' offers a great opportunity to get to grips with some of the things you've always promised yourself you'd do. So alongside your job search, think about doing more cooking, learning another language, updating your IT skills, or even writing a novel – it will also give you something intelligent to discuss at an interview when you are asked what you've been doing since your last job.

ACTION

Be organised, get a 'job application system' sorted and use your free time wisely to learn new skills.

3 NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!

No, we don't mean the 'old boys' club', but simply keeping in touch with people so that you can help them – and they can help you. Vicky Valenta, a 38-year-old mother of two, was waiting for her youngest daughter to come out of school, when she started chatting to another mum – and it was there, at the school gates, that she found out about a vacancy as an administrator at the local estate agent. Vicky quickly made a phone call, was invited for an interview – and got the job!

ACTION

Talk to everyone you meet. Let them know what you can do and what you want – they might just be the contact that gets you the job.

4 BE FOCUSED

Following redundancy, Kim Slater, 43, found it impossible to get another job as a legal executive. When I met her, she'd been applying for every office position going, up to 40 a week, but with no success. I advised Kim to go for quality rather than quantity – it's vital to be clear why you consider yourself suitable for a particular job, so that you can tailor your CV appropriately. Once Kim started to focus on just three applications a week, she quickly got her first interview and was offered a job within a month.

ACTION

Make sure your application is suitable to the job and the company.

5 IS IT THE RIGHT JOB FOR YOU?

If you have been made redundant, it can be very tempting to accept the first job you are offered. But, while it might bring in money, you still need to be sure that it's right for you. If it's wrong, you're signing up to months of potential misery – and lots of short duration positions will not look good on your CV.

ACTION

Think about when you were happiest at work, and why, and see if the new company can meet the same criteria.

6 GO DIRECT

When Emily Trabazi, 35, lost her position as a project manager, she decided to treat her job search like a marketing campaign. She contacted companies direct and rather than asking, "Have you got a job?" (which is likely to result in a big, fat "NO"), she asked if she could meet for 20 minutes to find out more about openings as a project manager. She secured meetings with 12 out of the 20 companies she contacted, was able to explain why she thought she'd be perfect and when a vacancy eventually opened up, she got the job.

ACTION

Arrange some fact-finding interviews to help increase the number of people who know how great you would be as an employee.

7 BE WISE ABOUT RECRUITMENT CONSULTANTS

Paid by the company that's looking to hire, they aren't going to help you unless they think they'll make money out of you. So make sure your CV is directly relevant to the job on offer and be clear about what you want. Paula Webb, 33, found herself being sent for jobs as an expert in Excel – when she could only do the basics and wasn't interested in it at all. And don't hassle them or you may find yourself on the 'never call back' list.

ACTION

When meeting a recruitment consultant, prepare to sell yourself as hard as in any other interview.

8 CONTACT FELLOW PROFESSIONALS

Join business networking sites, such as LinkedIn. This site not only helps you reconnect with old colleagues and potential new contacts, but also keeps you informed about industry news. Karen Blackhurst, 41, found her old manager via LinkedIn, who told her about an events manager position, which Karen then applied for.

ACTION

Stay in touch with contacts. And look out for the SHE Means Business reader workshops.

9 DON'T GIVE UP

Even in good times, it can take three months or more to get a job. And with the recession, it could easily take six. Of course, you might be able to get a job paying the minimum wage more quickly, but if you are seeking something well paid, you need to be prepared to wait – and learn from your rejections. Hayley Brooke, 38, wasn't used to asking for feedback after interviews, but having plucked up the courage to do so, she was told she hadn't answered specific questions about the company in enough depth. So before the next interview, she spent an evening finding out everything she could about the company to which she was applying. This time, she got through to the final three – and, as I write, she is waiting to discover whether or not she has finally been successful.

ACTION

Stay positive and don't be afraid to ask for feedback to increase your chance of success the next time.

10 SEND A LETTER

Claire Steel, 36, a researcher, thought that sending a thank you letter after an interview was too grovelling. But I explained how it can make a real difference and ensure you stand out simply because so few people actually think to do this. So she wrote a note and put it through the company's door that evening. Claire reminded them of her strengths, while expanding on one or two areas in which she felt her responses had been a little weak. She rang me in amazement when she got a call for a final interview. After she got the job, she found out that the attention to detail she had shown, by sending a letter, had really impressed.

ACTION

Go the extra mile. It will really help when you're trying to set yourself apart from other applicants. **SHE**

• You can buy Denise's latest book *How to Get a Job in a Recession* (Brook House Press, £14.99) for £13.50 (inc FREE UK mainland p&tp) from the SHE Bookshop on 0845 606 4238.