



Photo Pol Sifter

Finding your career direction

Help and hope for job hunters and career changers

Most of us would like to have a great job - we're just wired that way. And most employers want to have great employees - it makes good sense to them.

We are looking for that particular situation where we can be happy, productive, even fulfilled and get well paid, i.e. not just any old job. Likewise, employers don't want just any old person to fill a vacancy, they are looking for particular skills, knowledge, qualities etc. Therefore, we're choosy on *both* sides of the equation.

So why can't we find each other sometimes? Why can't we find this ideal job? Why can't employers find the right people?

Well, employers can advertise the job, and we can apply along with everyone else - but only if we see the advert in the first place. Then of course it's down to whether our CV and interview skills are good enough and genuinely reflect us.

Employers can also fill the vacancy *without* advertising, and they do - a lot - for all kinds of vacancies. Why? Basically, they want to reduce their recruitment risk by finding someone whose work and character come recommended in some way. Nobody knows the actual percentage of positions that are filled in this un-advertised way, but it's big enough for all job hunters and career changers to take very serious note of it.

The job hunt and recruitment 'system' has got a few further holes in it:

- Sometimes employers just can't find the right person and so the vacancy goes unfilled. A tragedy when the right person was in fact out there.
- Occasionally employers can discover that they've recruited the wrong person, a few months in. This is expensive in lots of ways.
- Now and then we can sell ourselves successfully - but into the wrong job. In this scenario there are no real winners.
- Or sadly, we don't realise or believe that there *are* un-advertised opportunities out there, and so we don't go looking.

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Carey Adams - Personal Careers Advice, Abbey House, Abbey Green, off Northgate Street, Chester, CHI 2JH

Tel: 01244 403422 Email: info@careyadams.co.uk Web: careyadams.co.uk

- Lastly, job hunting is hard enough anyway, but it's almost impossible when we don't know what we're looking for or what direction to go in. In the A-Z of Jobs and Careers, there are over 2200 listings - a mixture of jobs and market sectors. It starts with Accountancy and ends with Zoology and these represent the classic and conventional roles, ideal for many people. But today, in reality, there's a greater richness and diversity to the marketplace. In between the many A-Z types of roles, there are thousands of what you might call hybrid or less conventional roles. Perfect for those who don't fit into the A-Z. These roles call for a particular blend of skills, knowledge, qualities and enthusiasms. A unique role for a unique person - work that they can really *love to do*.

So, a job hunter or career changer can be faced with a huge number of both classic and hybrid jobs, some of which are advertised but many un-advertised. It can be bewildering. At worst, after some false starts and rejections, the temptation can be to give up and settle for second or even third best - and that can last a lifetime! What's to be done?

Well of course, employers need accurate job descriptions and person specifications and so on - but it's us individuals who really need to change. Instead of looking *outwards* at the marketplace for inspiration and direction, we need to get more comfortable looking *inwards first*, taking stock of ourselves. For example; what real skills and talents can we bring? What real qualities do we offer? What real knowledge and expertise can we provide? When we have a thorough and genuine knowledge of ourselves, then ideas about what's next and various opportunities start to emerge, and we can discover our true direction. It's like drawing back the bow, before finding the target and then releasing the arrow.

Overall, it's about job hunting with a more focused and less scattered approach. But it's also about job hunting by engaging our head *and* our heart. How?

Well, when we take stock of our knowledge base and the subjects that really interest us, it will point us to possible industries or market sectors. In simple terms, we can do this by listing what we know about, and then drawing out the subjects where we have both high interest, and high expertise.

If we take stock of our top skills and talents, it will point us to possible jobs or roles. This can be done by listing our life's achievements and experiences, those things from our work, home or leisure life that we really enjoyed and did well. Then it's down to combing through those stories for our recurring top 10 or 20 abilities.

When we take stock of our best qualities and style of working, we're much better placed to find a job where we can be ourselves. These qualities also come to the surface in the stories above.

Even with an initial analysis of our strengths, preferences and motivations, we're better equipped to sense what's next, research it, job-search for it and then land it. A fuller study though, can mean a life-changing boost to our personal confidence and lead to the job of our dreams.

Here are some genuine examples of people's transitions. These are job hunters and career changers who have found their direction and got the position they wanted;

■ From a self employed business consultant to a strategic bid manager in a telecoms company ■ From various part-time jobs to an off-road vehicle instructor and demonstrator for the vehicle manufacturer ■ From a mechanical engineer in power generation to a project engineer in petrochemicals ■ From TV and video production to home tutoring in computers and mobile technology ■ From a parenting advisor with a charity to a development advisor at a men's prison ■ From general manager at a packaging company to financial controller and treasurer at a global regulatory consultancy ■ From a regional airline pilot to a senior first officer for a national airline ■ From graduating at university in information management to an IT consultancy project team leader ■ From a varied work background to a marketing and partnership manager for a major sports and entertainment venue ■ From owning a design and print business to running a creative hub and art studio ■ From a technician at a watch repairers to a business data analyst at a county council ■ From running several businesses to university lecturing in a business school ■ From a freelance software and web designer to the head of digital development for a holiday company ■ From business development at a law firm to marketing management for a UK wildlife charity...and so on, you get the idea.

Of course, taking stock of how we're made in order to find the best matching job, does take a little time and effort - but for those who do, the rewards are hard to overstate:

- ✓ They have direction, alternative options and a plan of action
- ✓ They feel hopeful and have more energy for the hunt
- ✓ These people are persuasive on paper and when face-to-face
- ✓ Deep inside they know that they have something good to offer
- ✓ They develop the confidence to network, approach organisations directly and seek out hidden opportunities

- ✓ They maximise their chance of landing their ideal job. Work that's satisfying and rewarding
- ✓ This investment in themselves means that they are always ready to approach the marketplace in the future
- ✓ And for those who want to 'make a difference' in this world, they are closer to that too.

Put simply, everyone gains - ourselves, our families, our employers, our communities.

Some final thoughts;

Yes, many people are unemployed - we know the statistics. But there are other statistics too. Every month, because of the churn and movement in the marketplace, employers are looking for new people for new positions. Large and small employers, conventional and unconventional organisations. As I write this, on one job board alone there have been 323,143 new UK jobs posted in the last 7 days - and these are just the advertised ones. There are thousands of others un-advertised.

To conclude, it's my belief that;

- You have a unique set of gifts, talents, interests, preferences and motivations - and that there's a home for it all
- You *can* find your direction - other people have
- There *are* jobs out there - exciting ones
- Apart from wanting a great job - we're also wired to want to make a difference - and in fact they go hand in hand.

Carey Adams

P.S. Please get in touch if you would like to talk over your job or career situation.

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