

Looking For Work? Avoid Getting Too Crazy

By [Amy Lindgren](#)

Updated: 03/20/2009 07:29:04 PM CDT

When it comes to projects that can make you crazy, there's nothing quite like a job search. For one thing, employers never seem to behave in a logical way — or at least, they don't behave the way you would in their shoes.

For that matter, job seekers — and that probably means you — don't act in a logical way either. Some will insist on doing things that worked in their last search, 15 years ago, despite the fact those things aren't working now. Others will decide to hang back, seeming to reason that if the market is tight, they'll somehow improve their chances by doing nothing.

The problem is that there isn't any foolproof way to do a job search. What works for one person seems to fall flat for another. Still, there are definitely some things that will prove to be unproductive and crazy-making for everyone. Here are five guaranteed ways to send yourself over the edge while looking for work.

1. Crazy idea: Show your resume to a lot of people and ask their opinions; try to accommodate everyone by making all the changes they suggest. Better yet, send it to one of the free critique services advertised on the Internet, then act surprised when they decide you need a brand new resume, written by them.

Better idea: Identify your job goal and write your resume or have it professionally written for that work. Then use it for a while to see what employers think of it. In the long run, they're the only ones whose opinions matter. If you get interviews with it, it's the best resume ever.

2. Crazy idea: Change your job goal frequently, or go for several completely different types of jobs at once. Revise your resume for every type of job, and for every opportunity that comes up in that category.

Better idea: Same as above. Choose a goal and stick with it until the market tells you it won't work. Write one resume, but customize every cover letter to highlight your strengths for that company.

3. Crazy idea: Expect employers to see things from your perspective. Getting fired was not your fault, it's reasonable to ask for telecommuting in the first interview, and your annual curling championship justifies an extra week of vacation. Right?

Better idea: Look at things from the employer's point of view. Employers are struggling right now as much as job seekers are. They need someone to help solve problems, not create new ones. Go into interviews asking yourself "What's their greatest need? How can I fill it?" and not "What can I get out of this situation?"

4. Crazy idea: Don't network and don't do any research, so you don't know what's going on in your field. After all, you've got the experience from past jobs and you have some training, so you probably know enough to get by. Not getting called back for second interviews is probably just coincidental to not preparing very much before the first interview.

Better idea: Treat every interview as if you were about to propose an expensive consulting package — because you are. You are walking into someone's office and asking for keys to the place, as well as paid vacation and a regular salary. Shouldn't that be worth a whole bunch of phone calls to find out everything you can about the challenges and opportunities facing this company?

5. Crazy idea: Take whatever's not working in your job search and do a lot more of it, especially if that means spending hours on the computer completing online applications.

Better idea: Stop and evaluate your job search every few weeks. Which steps did you take that paid off? Which ones didn't seem to yield any results? Are you getting enough leads? Sending out enough unsolicited resumes to balance the responses to posted positions? Have you tried looking for the same position in a different industry? Looking for a different position in the same industry? Are you tracking your efforts so you can make a meaningful analysis?

Here's one last crazy job search strategy to avoid at all costs: going it alone. You need support and friendship and guidance to get through this challenging time. Choose a job search buddy or a support group or a career counselor to stick with you while you pick through the good ideas and the crazy ones.

Amy Lindgren owns a career consulting firm in St. Paul. She can be reached at [alindgren@ prototypecareerservice.com](mailto:alindgren@prototypecareerservice.com).