



## Staying Sane during a Job Search: Strategies for Coping

By Elizabeth Freedman

There's nothing like looking for a job day after day and month after month to get someone running for the medication. Hopefully you haven't had to endure this little test of sanity, but if you doubt me as to how maddening it can be, try it for yourself — an endless job search can seriously drive you crazy. Not to mention that it can frustrate and depress the heck out of you, especially when those darn recruiters and hiring managers won't return your calls or emails. And what about the annoyance and humiliation of having to tell people that no, you haven't found anything yet — for the tenth time?



If you've been looking for a job and are wondering if you're going to need to start looking for a psychiatrist while you're at it, read on for a few tips on how to stay sane during a job search.

### Deal with Your Issues — Then Move On

It's normal to experience a wide range of emotions during a job search, from elation ("Here comes the job offer!") to anger ("When the *hell* am I going to get a job offer?") to depression ("I will never again be offered another job"). But no matter how justified your feelings, you aren't doing yourself — or your job search — any favors when you let them get the best of you. This isn't to suggest that you would think of sobbing on the phone to a recruiter, but don't underestimate how even subtle displays of emotions like frustration or impatience can shine through during your communications with hiring managers, including emails, phone calls, and, of course, interviews.

The bottom line? If you're talking to people who can hire you, but are still seething just the slightest bit at your last boss, or feeling just a wee bit desperate because of your dwindling bank account, potential recruiters and hiring managers will smell your issues a mile away, and you'll be hurting your chances of landing your next opportunity. Think about it — would *you* want to hire someone in a negative state of mind? Understandable though your feelings may be, do what you need to do to stay positive when you're in job-search mode.

### Quit Waiting for the Phone to Ring

We've all heard stories about people who landed jobs effortlessly, like the one about the guy who posted his resume online and had multiple offers before the week was through. Or, how about the gal who had a cousin whose

boss just happened to have an opening for a new position that she'd be perfect for? How nice for them, but here's the deal: These people aren't you. This isn't to say that a job won't land in your lap, but if Lady Luck hasn't smiled on you yet, then it's time to face the reality that recruiters aren't knocking down your door. And then, roll up your sleeves, cause it's job search time!

This means that if you thought you could land a job by now without networking, picking up the phone, and doing plenty of follow-up, those days are over, too. This isn't as depressing as it sounds, because the type of skills and strengths that are gained during a job search — sales and marketing skills, the ability to skillfully network, and persistence in the face of rejection, to name just a few — are truly skills for life.



### Forget about Short and Sweet

Tell the truth: Weren't you just the teensiest bit hopeful that your job search would be short, sweet, and a piece of cake? Can't blame you for that, but let's face facts: Expecting a job search to be easy and over fast is like expecting to become a great skier the first time you hit the slopes. Neither scenario is particularly likely.

Here's the reality that we hate to hear: A job search probably will take longer than you think, so take that part-time job to earn a little cash, or sign up for that course at your local community college if it's going to provide you with some marketable skills. In other words, don't delay making your own job-search investments, and quit holding back if you need to take certain steps in order to improve your job search. After all, if you were convinced that you were going to land a job in only a few weeks, you probably wouldn't sign up for a class, pay money to attend a conference, or even



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build relationships through networking, even though these might be the very steps you need to take in order to get hired.

The truth is that most things are tough before they become easy, and a job search is no different. But, as you get your resume in great shape, practice those interviewing skills again and again, and continue to reach out and get the feedback you need in order to improve, your search will get easier. Just like a skier, the more you're willing to put yourself out there and practice, the better you'll get. Best of all, making the investment to take the extra steps can only yield better returns for you, your job search, and your career in the long run.

## About the Author

Elizabeth Freedman, MBA, is an award-winning speaker and business columnist and is the author of *Work 101: Learning the Ropes of the Workplace without Hanging Yourself* and *The MBA Student's Job-Seeking Bible*. She was a 2005 finalist for College Speaker of the Year, an honor awarded by the Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities, and runs a Boston-based communications and career development firm that helps new professionals look sharp, sound smart, and succeed on the job. Clients include the Gillette Company, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and the Thomson Corporation. For more information about the author, please visit [www.elizabethfreedman.com](http://www.elizabethfreedman.com).

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