

BRIDGE the Gap in Your Career

Coach DQ

Once upon a time, you could get a degree, land a job with a great company that would “take care of you,” rise steadily through the ranks, and retire thirty years later with a sweet pension and a few great memories.

Unfortunately, that scenario exists today only in the employment history books, and a few isolated corners of the business world. As anyone who watches the news can tell you, job security is no longer a given, no matter how hard you work. Rampant layoffs and corporate “restructuring” have kicked thousand of would-be lifers to the curb. And so, employees have responded in kind, taking their job security and financial future into their own hands.

At any given time, 50% of the work force is seeking a new job, or considering a career change. In May 2010, there were 3.2 million job openings in the U.S., but more than 4 million job separations.⁽¹⁾ That means that either you, or the person standing next to you, is actively looking for a new job right now. It also means that while companies are picky about whom they hire and hold on to, individuals are being just as selective about where, and for whom, they work.

Becoming laser-clear about what you want from your career is the first step to making it materialize. My BRIDGE career search strategy process is designed to help you do just that—and then, to help you put this information to work for you.

BRIDGE is an acronym for the six steps in my highly successful career search strategy. It’s designed to help you bridge the gap between where you are and where you want to be, so you can accelerate your career and love your life!

1. **Become clear** about what you're looking for. Can you clearly articulate what you want in your career? If you’re not sure, notice the difference in these three responses:
 - “I am looking for a Project Manager position.
 - “I am looking for a Project Manager position in the advertising industry.”
 - “I am looking for a Project Manager position in the advertising industry, working on healthcare accounts.”

The last response, of course, is the clearest—but don’t stop there. Become clear on the type of company culture you want to work in, the tasks and projects you want to be working on, how long your commute will be, your salary, and what a day in a life in your new career will look like. Write it down, make lists, and write mission statements. Come up with a clear definition of your dream career. The more clearly you articulate what you’re looking for, the more likely you are to find it.

2. **Research** companies who hire for the specific positions you’re interested in. Take note of what key words they are using to describe the position, then, look at your resume, is it in alignment? This is very important. After all, you’d never set an account or marketing strategy without doing the research first, would you? Your career search is a business,

too, so treat it like one. How can networking help you increase your contact list and get the word out?

3. **Identify** your target market. Which companies do you want to work for? Which do you most definitely *not* want to work for? Which companies can best utilize your expertise and skill sets?
4. **Develop** your resume/CV, and your list of contacts. Now that you have clearly defined the type of position you're after, and you've researched your target market, you will be better equipped to articulate your goals to your contacts. Ask your contacts if they know anyone in the companies you're targeting, and have your resume close to hand.

Also, don't forget to talk to your dentist, doctor, house cleaner, neighbors, relatives, recruiters, and even your former boss. Utilize your alumni resources. You never know who might have a connection to a contact. You can expand your list of contacts by using tools like www.linkedin.com and www.zoominfo.com.

5. **Get a Game Plan!** Set aside time to write out a game plan. This can be very simple, such as a bulleted list of items to support your search initiatives for the week, or it can be more complex. Whatever you choose, make sure it's specific. Instead of jotting down, "Send out resumes," try writing, "Go to office supply store to choose paper, send resumes to John and Beth, get fax number/e-mail for Company X." Keep track of when and where you've sent resumes, and follow up. Attend networking events, and attend industry specific associations meetings and/or groups. 80% of all jobs filled are filled through networking, 20% through ads; most people spend all of their time sending out resumes, from behind their computer and missed 80% of the opportunities. Conduct informational interviews, use article marketing to help you tap into the hidden job market and develop new relationships.
6. **Execute & Evaluate.** Remember that even the best plans need to have concrete action behind them to succeed. It's not going to happen by itself. Block off time in your calendar to execute, evaluate, and adjust your strategy as needed.

You are the sole driving force behind your life and career. When you take charge, make a plan, and work to follow through, you're stepping up to take the wheel of destiny, and building your own bridges to a fantastic future.

- (1) U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Press Release, June 13, 2010.
<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/jolts.pdf>

Once you've build the BRIDGE you'll want to be sure to avoid these "**Top 5 Things That Can Kill Your Candidacy**"

1. Not being up to date with technology

If your skills are outdated look into the many available classes, buy a book, or take a course on line. Get up to date!

2. Staying with the same company for too long

Yes I will be bold enough to say it because I see it all the time! This is not a myth; being with the same company beyond 15 years even if you have moved up the ranks can hurt your personal brand. The concern often is that the person is stalled in his/her career and isn't expanding their skills aggressively enough and can be considered stale. Other times the fear is that no matter how qualified the candidate is, he/she won't be able to adapt to a new company very easily.

3. Applying for positions you are over qualified for

Some say it's a numbers game but sending your resume to just any job especially if you are over or under qualified doesn't make a good impression.

4. Sending a generic cover letter

The more you can target your cover letter to the specific skill-set the prospective employer described in the job description, the better response you'll receive. Think about the objections the prospective employer might have when reviewing your resume.

5. Sharing your salary history

Online forms and filling out applications can be tedious, however if you fail to leave the salary section blank, employers can view you as unwilling to comply with guidelines, somewhat difficult, or unable to follow instructions. You never want to write in a specific number, or give a range; instead write or respond with one of the following: would be happy to discuss in the interview, open or negotiable. Do your research on where the salary for the position should be. Get the employer to speak first about the range of the position and ask for a job description.

Bio

Dawn Quesnel, CPCC, PCC (a.k.a. Coach DQ), is a professional certified coach, speaker, radio show host, and workshop leader who helps sales, marketing, advertising, and creative entrepreneurs to accelerate their careers so they'll love their lives! Before becoming a coach, Dawn was a record-breaking executive recruiter at two of Boston's premier agencies; now, she uses her unique and powerful combination of skills to help clients reduce their job search by ½ the time, while helping them take their careers and personal lives to the next level. Learn more about Dawn at www.coachdq.com!