

## Four Job Search Competencies You Need To Succeed

In today's challenging job market companies tend to look at why not they should hire someone rather than why. Consequently, you, the job seeker, must be well prepared to convince your potential employer that you are the best candidate available. In order to do so the job seeker must have overlapping competencies that are often essential in getting the job you want. Now my experience is primarily as a recruiter and career coach in the information technology and software domain. But these competencies are almost universal, encompassing all industry and service sectors. My intention here is to offer a brief overview of four core competencies you need to succeed in your job search, in particular, and your career development in general. In so doing, hopefully you can take away a framework that will maximize and motivate your efforts. These competencies are: job skills, rapport building, logistics and search strategies.

Skills are pretty self evident. You need these qualifications to get an interview and get a job offer. Often in my years as a recruiter and career coach, I see people who say either I don't have that skill but I have something similar, or with my background I can learn these skills very quickly. This argument, which sometimes worked in stronger job markets in the past, is generally ineffective today because of many candidates that have all, or almost all of the required skills. Moreover, the more senior or complex the position is the level of your skill knowledge is also an important factor. Finally, it seems many companies lack a sense of urgency in filling open positions, so they are content to wait for a near perfect match. Because, in some fields like IT, there are often low cost, offshore workers with the requisite skills, so often even good isn't good enough. Finally, if you don't have the necessary skills I strongly encourage you to acquire them through certificate programs or other education and/or training resources.

Rapport involves most simply getting the hiring authority to like you as a person and thinking this liking will continue once you are hired Here soft people skills like listening, politeness, positivity and, in particular, emotional intelligence and empathy are essential. Rapport building is most prominently displayed in the interview process. However networking through social media, inside company contacts, and attending in person networking events can build rapport and improve your odds in finding the position you want. Also, showing concern and curiosity for the company in terms of what you can offer them, versus what they can offer you, is very important. Bottom-line, being present, positive, and polite is essential. Now, many people don't inherently possess these interpersonal strengths, but with a little effort and, if necessary, assistance by a job counselor or a career coach, these qualities can be learned.

Logistics, in this context, refer to such issues as resume and cover letter construction,

research on the industry and specific companies you are interested in, and acquiring and prescreening references. Also, cogently following up with the employer after the interview is a critical logistic issue as well. Each of these pieces are paramount if you want to be as appealing as possible to your prospective company. There are many excellent books (my current favorite is: "Headhunter" Hiring Secrets: The Rules of the Hiring Game Have Changed . . . Forever! By Skip Freeman"), and, sometimes free, training centers will assist you in mastering industry standard methods in all these logistical issues. If you don't approach these issues with due diligence, then you risk a relatively minor error derailing your job search

While skills, rapport, and logistics can get you a job, an overarching strategy will help you both get the job and further your career. The planning and execution of your carefully crafted job search strategy provides the context in which your diverse competencies gain focus and continuity. Crafting a good strategy is a bit like being a good chess player where you are not only mindful of your current move, but future moves that raise the odds of winning as well. Over the years I have looked at thousands of resumes and it is almost immediately apparent to me who has an effective, upward trending strategy, and who seems to bounce from one position to another with no cohesive plan. Consequently if you desire career success and fulfillment you must develop and stick to a strategy that resonates with your skills, interests, temperament, and core values. Moreover, even if you find yourself unemployed, it is important to try as much as possible to maintain your strategic discipline and not succumb to tendency to take anything that is offered. This type of move might prove damaging later, and is only recommended unless you are facing an imminent financial, or other, crisis.

As you can see from the four areas of competence I recommend for a successful job search, it is important your efforts are holistic, balanced and in line with a personal career development plan. The job market, especially if you listen to alarmist media portrayals, can be scary place to venture into, so a positive, patient, and persistent mindset is essential. However, if you possess the requisite job skills: rapport building, logistics and strategy, then you can be somewhat confident you can get a job you want. But be mindful that the potential employer is generally looking to exclude you, so it is essential for you to be resilient, as well as resourceful, in your efforts. There are situations where particularly rare skills, can compensate for mediocre competencies in another area, like when a highly skilled technologist possesses only mediocre, at best, rapport building capabilities. Finally, I strongly encourage you to take a very objective look at your own competencies, and if you see areas that need improving, please make every effort possible to do so before you begin your search.