

DON'T BE A JOB SEEKER

Explains why 'job seekers' get the brush off and how to change the conversation from skills to solutions and from "I need a job" to "I have incredible value". If you're not getting past 'go to our website', read this book for simple strategies on how to get people to want you.

Be a problem solver

STOP BEING A FRUSTRATED JOB SEEKER

By Alan Hill

Have a different conversation

Most (too many) job seekers are having the wrong conversation and they are getting frustrated in their job search, so they create all sorts of 'justifications' to explain their failure to find work (I am too old, I don't have a degree, I am too young, etc.). Even worse, well-meaning and mis-informed people will collude with them to enhance the experience and justification by telling them these excuses as 'facts' why they weren't selected during the hiring process. They justify their 'going with someone else more qualified' by stating these are the reasons they didn't get hired.

The real truth is they are talking to the wrong people (HR) about the wrong things (skills) for the wrong reasons (I need a job). There are 3 types of conversations you will have in your job search, depending on who you are talking to and what level of position you are going for.



Entry Level: You will be 'forced' to talk to HR and they will screen you out (or in) based on your skills. All job seekers are put in this bucket regardless of experience when they talk about their skills. This is where they send people who talk about skills.

Experienced: The next step up will be about value, you can start having these conversations right now, this week with people who work at the company you want to be hired by. You don't need to wait for a

job posting to have this conversation. This is the level we're focusing on in this discussion. As you'll see, you need to tell them a story about your when you solved problems for others (your value to them).

Leadership: Leaders will evaluate your character based on the stories you tell. If you are at this level, tell them the stories about value, but make sure you tell them why you cared about the people. Why did they matter to you? This will allow your character to shine through the story.

When I work with job seekers I tell them to stop being job seekers, start being problem solvers. Stop looking for jobs and start finding people that have needs you can solve. While they may understand that, they still don't know, on a practical level, how to do that.

The problem is that job seekers communicate to people from a needy state. And that only results in a 'push away' response such as 'go to our website'. What they mean when they say that is 'I regard you as a door-to-door salesperson, as a waste of my time. You and your needs provide no value to me. Therefore, I would like you to go away as quickly as possible.' Since social decorum prevents them from saying that, they developed an automatic response that says 'go to our website (where you can leave me alone and quit bothering me with your needs)'.

If you keep getting the 'go to our website' response, it's because you keep asking the same question (in different forms) over and over 'do you have jobs?' Quite simply, **if you want a different response, ask a different question.**

So, here's the short course on how to change your conversations and change your results.

Know your value

It begins before you EVER set foot in the door. Do the work of identifying 4 to 5 times on each job you held where you improved something for someone else. There are five areas of improvement in every business. I call them:

Cheaper	Sales, Expenses, SG&A
Faster	Efficiency, Productivity, Successful teams
Better	Quality (service, products)
More	Functionality, Customers
People	Morale, Turnover, Training

There is a very simple process for finding your value. First, find a dialogue partner, someone whose job it is to ask specific questions. Once you have them, have them ask you to tell them a story about a time when you solved a problem for someone else at work. Here's the form they will use to capture your responses:

Problem

- What was the problem specifically? Why was it a problem for them? What would have happened if you didn't solve the problem? Who had the problem, a customer, your boss, the supplier, your team?

Action -

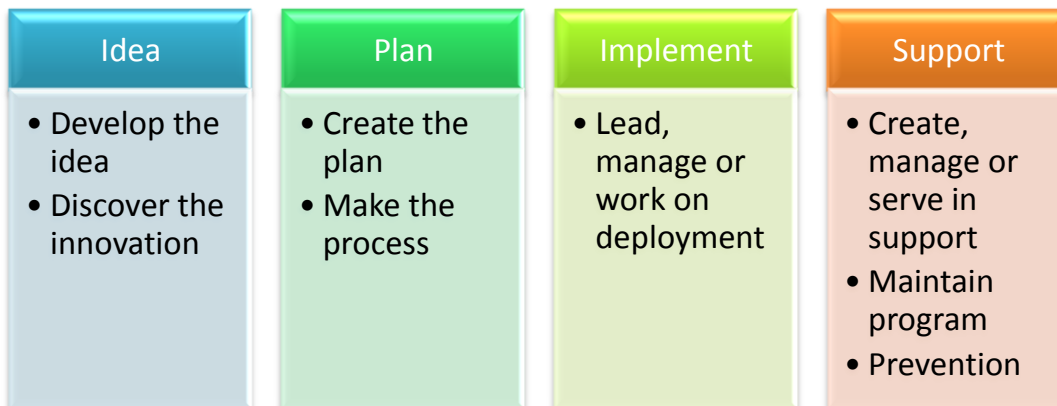
- What steps did you take to solve the problem? What process did you follow (or invent)? What corrective action did you take to ensure that it never happened again? What skills and talents did you draw upon to make it work successfully? How long did it take?

Result

- What benefits did the other person receive? What area (Cheaper, Faster, Better, More or People) did the benefit fall into? How much was it specifically worth in time, money or quality improvement?

This is important because people are seeking solutions to these problems. In every business, in every company people are struggling with finding solutions to these 5 problems. They don't ever go away, they just get worse (or better if they have the good fortune of meeting you).

There are 4 phases in which you can have an impact. You don't need to be the person who did everything from start to finish to claim credit for your good work. You know that success in business depends on the team you work with. So does your next manager. However, you do have to explain and take credit for your part in the overall success.



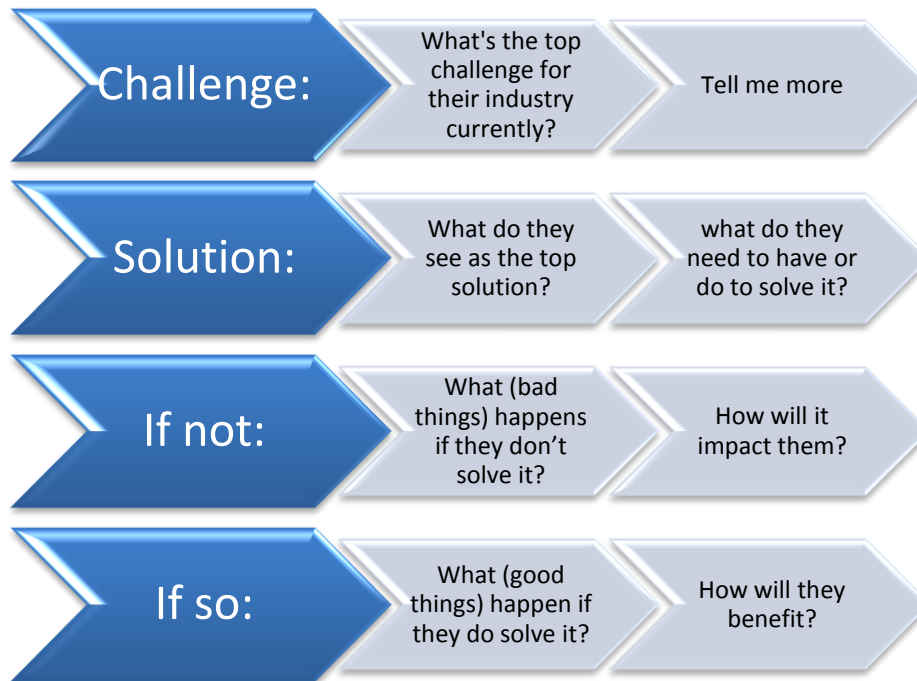
WARNING! You must do this exercise with a partner or it won't work. No one ever can self-identify their value without training because of social conditioning. Understand that you are fighting years of socialization that tells you 'don't put yourself forward' and 'It's bragging to claim that you're better than someone else'. That may be true in society but it eliminates the ability to find value. You must have your dialogue partner call you on this when you start saying things like "I was just doing my job" or "I wouldn't be able to quantify how much it was worth." This conditioned response will work against you when you try to identify your value.

Ask questions about them

Find them – trade and professional associations GO to the meetings, volunteer for the committees, and get involved in helping. Every profession and every industry has professional associations where hiring managers meet EVERY MONTH. You can go THIS MONTH and meet people in your profession and your industry. If you need help finding these groups ask your librarian for help using Gale's database 'Associations Unlimited'.

Now that you are in front of them, ask them about themselves. Who are they? What do they do? How is it going? Etc. These are all 'chit chat' and necessary for the person to decide that they like you enough to stay in conversation with you. They like you because you are asking them questions about their favorite subject in the world, them.

At some point, you will have built up enough social credibility with them to ask them the next series of questions that are very important because they set the stage for you to shine as their hero, their problem solver. You'll walk out on their mental stage and be the hero in the next step. Here's how you set the stage, ask them questions in four areas:



Communicate your value

As they are talking, confirm their experience with a story about when you solved that very problem. “Yes, it’s true, disorganized operations do create a lot of waste. That’s what I told my boss at Acme warehouse. So we reorganized the warehouse and increased efficiency over 70% in our first quarter”.

They will bite on that just like fish bait. “Really? Tell me more, how did you do that?” Then simply tell them “it took a lot of hard work, dedication and commitment from the team (three values), but in the end our efficiency improved dramatically” (never reveal your magician secret to the audience).

Then follow up by asking “Would you like to have coffee sometime and we can discuss it further, when we have more time?” Their response will be dramatically different than ‘go to our website and apply online’

Or, you can speak about these challenges to the association monthly meeting – just put the information you did about the problem solving steps in a PowerPoint and you have a short, 20 min presentation with time for questions. Use the “Problem, Action, Result” format to create your presentation. Do three of those ‘stories’ that are relevant to your audience and you’ll have them coming up to you afterward begging to meet with you.

If you can’t wait for the schedule for the association meeting then you can make an offer to present this mini-workshop to the department at the companies you want to work for. You don’t need to wait for them to come to you. Look on LinkedIn, find the people who are in charge of the departments you want to work for and offer to do the presentation for them. Do this for several companies and someone will

say 'yes'. **But they won't say 'go to our website' or 'apply online' because they can't, you didn't ask for a job, you asked to solve their problem.**

Alternative method (time shortened)

Well, what if you need to make an impact immediately? What if you need to get a dramatic change in your results today and can't wait or you don't want to go through all that 'chit chat'? Easy. Hit them with a verbal hammer of value. Here is a shortened 'two step' method to get them to ask you out on a 'date' for coffee so you can tell them more.

1. Know your value before you go (same as before).
2. Introduce yourself as value when they ask "Hi, who are you, what do you do?" Respond with: "I am the person who improved warehouse efficiency 70% in 3 months. What is your name?" (or similar value statement).

They will always respond in one of two ways:

- A. What???? Tell me more! How did you do that?
- B. Wow, that's amazing; did you see we're going to get rain?

You must remember, that both responses are 'honest', in that they are telling you either:

- A. 'I have that very problem, I need help solving it, you are my hero'.
- B. 'I know exactly what problem that is, I have no need to solve it, and I don't know anyone who does'.

If they respond with A (tell me more) then you can choose to tell them the 'action' part of how you solved it or offer to set a date and time to meet with them after the event so you can devote uninterrupted time to talking with them.

If they respond with B (not interested) then politely excuse yourself and introduce yourself to someone else at the association meeting or event. (Assuming you are attending a professional or industry association event).

Conclusion

This process works because you have changed the focus. You are no longer talking about yourself, your needs, your skills. You are now talking about them, their needs, their challenges and their desires to find someone to solve their problem.

It works because it's their job to find a way to hire you. That is why they call them a HIRING manager. It's YOUR job to demonstrate that you have value you can provide to solving their problem.

Recommended reading: get a copy of the book 'Indispensable by Monday'

(<http://www.bymonday.com>) by Larry Myler and read about all the ways you can start finding value in your workplace. You have already done this, but this book will help you find ways to capture, quantify and communicate it in a language your next boss will understand, value.