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THE
EMPOWERMENT TOUR
2009

Educate. Empower. Employ.

The Career Coaches' Book of Wisdom:

Tips from the Empowerment Tour

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The Career Coaches' Book of Wisdom:

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Millions of Americans were caught with their guards down and found themselves as casualties in the war of our ailing economy. You may be among the millions of unemployed Americans seeking employment in order to sustain and maintain your lifestyle. Or, you may be one of the millions of adults who have been unemployed for over a year now and have gone on countless job interviews and sent out hundreds of resumes to potential employers. Yet, the doors of new employment opportunities have not swung open for you. Or, you may be one of the many working adults who desire to change careers or even start your own business. However, fear of losing your job and not generating a steady income has halted your movement toward the career transition you truly desire.

Regardless of which of the three categories you find yourself in today, the reality is that drastic times cause for drastic measures. Now is the time to reassess your current situation and to reevaluate your skills and experiences. Are you prepared to compete for that ideal job or the career of your choice that you often daydream about? Do you possess the education required to compete with hundreds of other candidates vying for jobs and careers you are pursuing? Do you have a strategic plan for searching and landing your ideal job, transitioning in your career or starting a business? If you fail to plan, then plan to fail. The choice is yours.

This is a time of reinvention for working adults who are looking for a job, desiring to transition careers or start a business. A big part of your reinvention may require additional education to equip you with the tools needed to successfully gain that new job, advance and transition into upper management or to launch and operate your small business. You may be thinking that you lack the time, money and confidence to return to school. Consider online education as the solution to these challenges.

Online education allows you more flexibility with your time and the ability to pursue your degree online, at your convenience, in the comfort of your home. To help people afford to go back to school and to talk through their career path, eLearners.com created the Career Stimulus Package Empowerment Tour. The 2009 Empowerment Tour traveled across the country to about 40 cities offering free career coaching and the opportunity for people to apply for a full-tuition scholarship. About \$4 million in Career Stimulus Package scholarship funds was awarded, thanks to the following accredited online schools: American Public University, Ashworth College, Bryant & Stratton College, Capella University, Ellis University, Everest University, Virginia College and Western Governors University.

Once you take the first step (which is generally the hardest one to take) toward your reinvention and register to go back to school, your confidence level will soar and you will be well on your way to preparing and positioning yourself for your new job, new career or new business.

To help you along the way, consider using some of the helpful tips prepared by the Empowerment Tour coaches for getting and staying motivated on your career reinvention journey.

Good luck!

Adapting

It's not about you, it is about fit.

Every year, 15% of all jobs go away and are replaced by new ones. Companies come and go, even industries disappear. Employers adjust to business conditions, spending more or less, in one area or another, to keep competitive. The number one expense in most industries is employee salary. Employers are quick to lay off staff as the economy and business changes. It seldom matters how good of an employee you have been, if the businesses changes, your position might no longer be justified. It seldom is about you personally.

The same is true regarding who is hired. When jobs are scarce, employers don't hire people because they are qualified or could do the job. They hire the perfect fit. Employers want the most up-to-date skills, at the lowest salary, and employees who are likely to stay even when the economy turns around.

If you are over qualified, then you are not a good fit. You will likely feel you are underpaid, and you are likely to leave for a better opportunity. It wouldn't be smart for them to hire you, even though you can do the job. It's not about you, it's about fit. Don't take it personally. Be smart and don't waste your time pursuing jobs where you are not the best fit.

It's not about mistakes and regret; it's about curiosity and opportunity.

If you are human and out in the world, you have made mistakes. What is also true is that given who you are, you made the best decisions you could with the information you had at the time. Rather than staying in a state of shame or self criticism, think about what you can learn from the experience, be curious about what led to it, see how you might turn things around, be open to new opportunities that now present themselves.

For the recent mistakes you made, see if you can correct them or apologize. Clean it up what you can and forgive yourself. Fixing mistakes is a chance to demonstrate your character and even deepen relationships. With your newly acquired wisdom, you are better prepared to see new possibilities and to take advantage of new experiences. A life without mistakes is impossible. A life without curiosity, learning, and opportunity is unbearable.

Adapting



People don't like stories of woe. Turn your story into a "wow."

People get stuck telling stories of how outside circumstances caused their problems. They blame others, circumstances, or the economy. By focusing on what is wrong and how they have been done wrong, they can sink into feeling self-absorbed, angry, or depressed. People tend to underestimate their ability to cope.

In truth, the exact same set of circumstances can be the basis of a story of challenge, growth, and triumph. By focusing on possibility, opportunity, determination, and commitment, people can create a story that's engaging and draws others into wanting to help. Turn a woe into a wow, and others are compelled to become your allies.

It's not about "been there, done that", it's about, "learn more, don't stop".

Industries, professions, and jobs come and go rapidly. If a degree is 10 to 15 years old, it's out of date. In modern times, people have 3 to 5 careers in a lifetime.

Education isn't something you do only when you are young. Today, retooling yourself, earning continuing education credits, and ongoing personal development are now a way of life. You are never too old to learn. We are all life-time learners.

Don't become a dinosaur in your own time.

Previously, the longer people were in a position, the more valuable their knowledge and skills. In times of constant change, knowing a lot about what no longer matters, has almost no value and makes people sound "old". Previously, experts honored and studied the past. Now, experts focus on the predicting and building the future.

You want to study where your industry is going; what revolutionary technologies are coming, and how you can help make the future happen faster and better. Otherwise, you may become a dinosaur in your own time.

Focus & Direction

If you are willing to take anything, you'll get nothing.

When you are laid off, it is understandable that you will be fearful that you won't be able to pay the bill, support yourself and your family. After initial searches don't lead to a job offer, we often hear from people, that they will take any job. When you are feeling desperate, there is a tendency to go in circles. If you don't have a specific focus for your search, there is a tendency to throw your resume out to any job openings, whether they are appropriate or not for the level of your skills and experience.

If you don't get any response, which is likely, you may even get more frantic. This can either lead to you taking an inappropriate job where you will feel trapped, or you may literally become stuck and not know where to look next. Additionally, if you don't have a focus on your resume and just list jobs and skills, no one will take the time to figure out how to make use of you. It is much more likely that you will be able to find a job, if you focus. Target specific companies, organizations, and people and develop a plan to be known in your industry.

Just as happiness is an inside job, so is finding your career.

Many people start their job search by looking at the latest list of hot jobs. Although it's true that working in a hot field greatly increases the chances of employment and higher income, it is also true that a bad job fit can make someone miserable and even sick from stress.

A much better approach is to know yourself first. What is your natural genius? What are you passionate about? If you use your natural talents every day and pursue your passions, then you will love your job, be highly competitive, creative and live a happier life. Once you know yourself, then look at how you might apply your strengths to what is presently needed in our society. You will be much happier you did.

Focus & Direction



If your dream is unrealistic, make it realistic.

When we ask people what they REALLY want to do, they often mention something that they would love to do, but it is unrealistic. However, for every “unrealistic” job – there are individuals doing just that. It depends on whether you are willing to do what it takes to make it realistic. Are you willing to: get the appropriate training, work for less money, and persist even though you are rejected over and over.

Sometimes there may be a certain criteria for the job that you are unable to meet: i.e. a physical or mental disability. In those cases, perhaps there is something related to the dream that one can do. For example if one wants to be a pilot and has challenges with their vision, perhaps they can do something else in the airline industry. Often, there are life circumstances that will make it difficult (i.e family responsibilities, location). In those situations, perhaps you can take small steps to prepare yourself for what you want when it becomes more viable.

Lastly if all else fails, don't fail to keep what you love in your life. A life-long hobby can bring pleasure into your life daily, and perhaps leave you and your family a legacy.

If you don't like your options, design a new one.

Fifty percent of the careers in place 10 years from now haven't been created yet. New industries, degrees, careers, and jobs are inevitable, so why wait for someone else to make and take what you want?

If you don't like your job, consider redesigning it or creating a new position that better leverages your talents. If your college doesn't have the degree you want, why not help your school design a new program? Why not create your dream degree or career, blaze a trail for others, and leave a legacy.



Job Search

It's not about asking for a job, it's about attracting an offer.

Employers are often inundated with dozens if not hundreds of people hoping to work for them, especially if it is a job that is particularly desirable. Often they don't have a particular job available, and may just brush you off.

Rather than handing out your resume or your business card to any one who you think may have or know of an opportunity, it is best to visibly demonstrate your competencies. If you are in a profession, write articles, create presentations, volunteer for strategic committees. If you are in a trade, volunteer for organizations where you can display your competency and meet people in your industry. It is important to develop and maintain relationships.

One unusual and effective approach is to target specific companies that are a good match for your interests and talents. Study their industry, competitive environment, and competencies. Write a proposal to increase their business and profitability. Make hiring you a "no brainer".

If you want to increase your compensation, increase your contribution.

Some people focus on the salary that they "need to make". Focusing on the salary, distracts people from something more important, expanding their ability to create value. The fact is that people are paid, not based on their old salary or their standard of living, but based on the demand for what they do, their ability to do it well, and how easily others can do it too.

The way to earn more money is to find ways to create more value. Those who create plenty of value are in greater demand and harder to replace. If you want to double your salary, double your contribution.

It's OK to take something now that isn't what you want, as long as you are doing something else to get there.

Sometimes circumstances dictate taking an offer you want to refuse. Time is running out, bills need to be paid. That is fine. People can tolerate a job they don't want, as long as they are on the path to achieving what they do want.

Take a course, join your future professional organization, and continue to look for a job in your field. Don't allow yourself to become distracted. Happiness is the pursuit of a worthy goal, and what could be more worthy than a fulfilling career?

If you know more than the boss, it's time to charge a fee.

When you are in a position longer than a boss, or when you are overqualified for the job, there can be some tension. It is a natural cycle for a person to start as a novice and to grow into an expert. Sometimes a person's expertise can outgrow a company's needs. You may be feeling underpaid, undervalued. The boss might feel threatened by your expertise.

Many experienced employees see this when applying for a job. You know that you are more than qualified, but you don't get the job. This might be an opportunity for you to become a free agent or a consultant, and work on a contract basis- providing your expertise to several companies.

Networking

The odds that this person can hire you are small. The odds that they know someone who can help you are great.

First, take the awkwardness, stress, and desperation out of networking by assuming this person probably can't help you. Second, stay sharp, engaging, and on message with everyone you meet under any circumstances, because although they probably can't hire you, someone they know probably can help you. Share your dream job and your passion with everyone you meet. Make yourself memorable, so they can easily connect you with appropriate opportunities.

It's not about selling yourself to others; it's about getting others to sell for you.

Employers don't want to make a mistake about hiring the wrong person for a job. It costs a lot to hire a person, and there are often legal challenges in firing an employee. If someone they respect recommends that they consider you – they will pay attention. Your mission is to get influential people in the field or in the network of prospective decision makers to know you, your competencies, and character. It is best if you do this throughout your career, even when you are (or believe you are) securely employed. It does take some multiple interactions to develop trust.

You can help your "salesforce" speak on your behalf. They need to know exactly what you do well, who you help, and the top benefit you provide. It starts with you being clear regarding who you are and what you want. The second step is telling everyone you meet in clear, simple, and memorable language the same message. In a short time, you will have others selling you.

Givers gain.

Instead of thinking about what you need, show up at events with the goal of offering to help others make valuable connections and share resources. First, it feels good to help others. Second, if you are unemployed, helping others takes your mind off of your own troubles. Third, what goes around comes around. Directly or indirectly, favors get reciprocated. Givers gain.





Meet Michael Cushman

Empowerment Tour Coach

Michael Cushman's expertise includes career coaching, learning technologies, and change leadership. He has degrees in economics and business. Over a 30 year career, Michael has led operational, technical, personal, and cultural change initiatives at over 50 companies, including Verizon, BT, Holiday Hospitality, American Red Cross, Waste Management, Revlon, and Chevron.

In 2005, Michael started a partnership between the Denver Coach Federation and jobing.com to provide free career coaching sessions to job seekers. In 2008 with Paravox, Michael launched a one-day Message Makeover program to dramatically improve results for job seekers, service professionals, and entrepreneurs.

Throughout his career, Michael has interviewed over 1,000 executives, entrepreneurs, and job candidates. His work in group dynamics and nonverbal leadership is changing how others view branding, employee engagement, and leadership.

Michael is the immediate-past president of the Denver Coach Federation. He is a Sr. Fellow and Board Member of the futurist think tank, The DaVinci Institute. Michael is also a cofounder of LearnTheBook LLC, a next generation, online learning system. He blogs about change leadership, work, and nonverbal communications at EngagingChange.com. His book, *Searching - 1000 journeys for work and meaning*, will be published in late 2009.



Meet Ayn Fox

Empowerment Tour Coach

From entrepreneurs to corporate leaders, artists to scientists, Ayn has coached thousands of adults to create meaningful, fulfilling work. She brings a strong understanding and experience in whole brain creative thinking to the career development and job search process.

Having conducted training programs and retreats at corporations, government agencies, professional and non-profit agencies worldwide, she is familiar with a full range of career options. She is exceptionally skilled in working with her clients to recognize their unique qualities, expand possibilities and increase confidence. Her popular presentation: *Take This Job and Love It!* has inspired audiences to enhance their present positions and learn how they can use it to prepare for future opportunities.

Ayn holds a Master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, is certified as a Master Coach by the International Coach Federation and has studied and worked with several of the world's leading thinkers in career development and creative thinking.



Meet Stephanie Clark

Empowerment Tour Coach

Stephanie M. Clark is well versed in all aspects of business start-up and operations. Ten years ago she made the transition from employee to entrepreneur and has started three successful businesses, one non-profit and two for-profit companies. She empowers, coaches and mentors women across the country by sharing her mistakes made and lessons learned along her journey as an entrepreneur. She offers practical strategies toward achieving success as a business owner to those seeking to start a business or to grow their business.

As a marketing communications guru and entrepreneur, Clark possesses over 20 years of developing and executing effective marketing and public relations programs as well as producing small to large-scale special events. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Marketing from the University of Detroit-Mercy. She has worked in non-profit management for over 20 years and has worked with several corporations, faith-based and non-profit organizations as a marketing communications consultant.

Clark is also President and Publisher of MDK Media, Inc. a for-profit media and publishing company. Her debut book entitled *Life as a Single Mom: It Isn't Easy or Is It?* was released on October 26, 2007. Her next title, *Success Finds You When You Have Positioned Yourself to Be Found*, is scheduled for release in February 2010. She is also writing a parent handbook for incarcerated mothers, *Life As A Single Mom Behind Bars* and a character building workbook for teen girls, *Transforming Minds by Transforming Meanings* (both projects scheduled for release by April 2010).

Clark founded My Daughter's Keeper, Inc. (MDK) in July 2002. MDK is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which provides support and resources to mothers and caregivers raising adolescent and teenage daughters as well as provide self-development opportunities for women and girls. MDK works with mothers/caregivers, preteen and teenage girls from all socioeconomic backgrounds throughout the U.S. and abroad. Clark is also the National Director for Project Single Moms, a national advocacy and empowerment movement for single moms.

She has been featured in national media including FOX News, The Steve Harvey Morning Show, CNN's Comcast Newsmakers, The Huffington Post, Bloomberg Urban Report, Fox TV's The Morning Show with Mike & Juliet, NAACP's Crisis magazine and several other local radio and television media outlets. Also, she was featured in the August 2009 issue of Family Circle magazine.

She is a recipient of numerous awards and has presented keynote & motivational speeches to several faith & community-based groups, professional associations, corporations, government agencies, primary schools & colleges and has facilitated workshops to women & youth groups throughout the country. She currently resides in New Jersey.



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