

Your Dream Job : What It Takes to Get It

Taking baby steps, showing up and evolving

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Publishing in Leadership and Change Magazine | 2014

There is truth in cliches. That's why they stand the test of time. Cliches seem like some books you've read or movies you've watched, where on the second reading/viewing, you see and understand things a little differently from the first time. Is it the passage of time or simply the change in your experience that has given you a new perspective? In decades past, if you were like most middle-class urbanised folk, you would have grappled with the idea of what kind of study to undertake when you left school. You would have spent time wondering about the kind of job you would take up and what that would mean to you. But you would not arrive at any answers and if you lacked the desire and incentive to carve a niche for yourself, you would go with the flow and move with the crowd.

"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."

- George Bernard Shaw

In today's world, many still do go with the flow but so much more has come into play that the road is indeed muddled. The wealth of information that you can now access about other people, their lives, experiences and choices means that we have so much upon which to benchmark what we want to do for ourselves. The mobile workforce, the always-on internet lifestyle, the ease in which we can travel and cross borders, the rapid changes that technology has brought about in how we communicate and the information we share all come together to present us with so many options in terms of what work can mean to us.

Yet there will always be some of us who strive for high -powered positions and some who want work/life balance. The dream job? Well, that really depends on what your dream is, doesn't it?

The elements of a dream job vary from person to person but would typically include :

- a high degree of empowerment;
- flexibility and discretion in how day to day activities and your workday are managed;
- passion and an element of danger/the unknown/thrill in an area you are excited about;
- great rewards - both financial and otherwise; and

- a wider good - it would provide the opportunity for you to make a difference to your peers, your organisation and/or the wider community.

So, what does it take to land that dream job?

Know what you want

Understanding what you want from your job requires understanding what you don't want from it. It cannot stop there though. Knowing what you don't want simply doesn't address what you do want. And if you want to land that dream job, your very first step will involve articulating to yourself the elements of your dream job. If you leave it a vague notion, it stays in that shape and prevents you from identifying it when it flits past you.

Embrace many varied roles

Part of the journey towards knowing what you want is understanding that this is a process. You need to figure out what makes you tick, what you are passionate about and what you will respond to. And that doesn't happen unless you allow yourself the chance to try new things.

Make sure your effort is not half baked

The problem with the generic outreach is that it's half baked and sloppy. When you send a message that:-

- starts with a 'Dear Sir/Madam...' or 'Hi there...'
- encloses a resume with a request to help you find a job and nothing more;
- is addressed incorrectly to someone else or refers to your organisation incorrectly;
- appears to be a copy/paste effort sent to a great number of people and this first contact is from someone you don't already know

understand that there are effectively two messages being sent out. There is the spoken message and the unspoken one. Chances are, with contact like the ones above, the person reaching out has not spent enough time considering all aspects of this outreach.

In doing so, he has done himself a complete disservice. He has not grasped fully the impact of the unspoken message conveyed and whether his actions here are a match against his goals.

The truth is that landing your dream job is not rocket science. It's just hard work and a question of what you are willing to give up in order to make this happen for yourself. You know you need to put yourself through the paces and do the work that transforms you. You do this with the understanding that you have, enough within yourself, to do yourself justice.

Put. Your. Best. Foot. Forward.

Make it easy for the person looking to hire

The problem with sending your resume across is that thousands of others are doing the same. How do you stand out? Not with pink embossed paper or perfumed edges but with your brand and your body of work.

Positioning though, is key. When you put down a whole bunch of responsibilities you have accepted, tiringly list every endeavour or project you've worked on, present an eight page resume, what you are effectively saying is, "Here, I did the work. You can see it here, if you are bothered to scan, trawl and find the information you need and join the dots as you see fit".

A prospective employer is rarely going to do that, let alone enjoy that process. They have to go through so many resumes - it's but the tip of the iceberg. They have to do rounds of interviews, management meetings to discuss these candidates, finalise job descriptions, assessments and psychometric tests and then some. If you can't be bothered to connect the dots for them, they certainly will not do it for you.

You need to make it easy for them and you do it by :-

1. Keeping it short but focused. Succinct is divine, easy on the eye but very difficult to achieve.
2. Figuring out the organisation/candidate fit - it takes work to research the company and figure out where you fit in with the role and their values. But if you choose not to spend time and effort on this, this says more about you than what your resume does.

3. With your letter of application. The resume is critical but so is the letter accompanying it.

The resume is only one step in this journey

Finding your dream job and securing it, truth be told, requires a multi-pronged approach, a long term view and patience. You should be building up to it, in every single thing you do. If you do so, when the time comes that you approach your dream job, you have laid the groundwork, fleshed out the profile and done the preliminary work. Not purely in anticipation of what the role is but because this was part of a bigger plan of yours.

Managing expectations

When you make the first contact, there's a set of expectations on the other side. Expectations that you know nothing about and which to some extent, you cannot tailor your response to. Therefore, any contact established should ensure that the expectations you set are ones that you can not only meet but pass with flying colours. If you refer to yourself as a superstar with a myriad number of skills, as someone who has done it all, you may be setting yourself up to fail. It's a fine balance to talk yourself up without getting egotistical.

Prove it!

Anything you refer to in your resume should be backed up with proof. You simply do not position yourself well when using superlatives or talking up all your good points when it's not backed up with concrete evidence. Bear in mind, if you are going to talk about it, figure out a way to indicate how you will prove to the reader that you are who you say you are.

In that light, in terms of references, it would be far more beneficial to provide information on what others who have worked with you and for you, have to say about you. Contact these people and find out whether they would be happy to recommend you and why. It would be a lot better than simply listing three names as references.

Build a story of brand 'you'

Your brand arrives long before you do. Your brand needs to show you as a compelling choice and lead an employer to want to discover more. Find ways at every point and turn to flesh yourself out,

by taking on new responsibilities, doing things for free or even when its tasked to someone else. Volunteer. Show interest in what others are doing. Be bold. By doing so, you build on your strengths and find out more about your weaknesses, ultimately creating a more rounded proactive you.

Manage the touchpoints

If you look at this as a process, rather than an end result, you realise that the touchpoints are key to establishing a perception of your brand.

- What was your first contact like - how did you reach out and what did you say?
- What does your digital footprint say about the kind of person you say you are and the kind of person you seem to appear as?
- What does your resume indicate about you?
- How did your first meeting with the headhunter go? How were the meetings with the organisations interested in you?
- How were you perceived at the second stage of that interview?

You don't want to leave this to chance : you want to carefully manage each and every touchpoint so that the end result is consistent with the image you are presenting of yourself.

Authenticity is key

In order to be authentic to others, you need firstly, to be authentic to yourself. In other words, be clear about what you've failed on, why and how you feel about it. If you can talk about these sensitive issues in an forthright and genuine manner, you will show your grit, ambition, courage and humanity.

Refine your voice and be heard

The movers and shakers of the world didn't get there by being silent, by following the pack or doing what was expected. They were willing to risk it, to speak up, to be heard. And so must you. While at first, it may seem difficult, persevere. Through this process, you will come to discover who you are and what you stand for. And when you are clear about what this means, it makes it easier for others to see this in you as well.

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