

Top Ten Job Search Recommendations

Job seekers make a series of common and egregious errors. Here is the accumulated wisdom of three longtime coaches, Sarah Stamboulie, Anita Attridge and Ellis Chase:

1. Giving out references that don't sing your praises

You don't want a reference to damn you with faint praise. Ask if the person is willing to say you walked on water. If not, find another reference.

2. Laying out your résumé in a microscopic font

Too many candidates think they need to fit all of their qualifications onto a single, illegible page. Either cut down the word count or let the copy flow onto a second page.

3. Failing to say glowing things about your former employer

Even if you were laid off from your last job, find a way to say positive things about your last employer. Hiring managers identify with your former boss, not with you.

4. Saying negative things about your own track record

Even if you are looking for work because you're most recent venture has had problems, find a way to put a positive spin on your experience.

5. Talking too much at the start of an interview

It's fine to give a 30-second summary of your accomplishments, but then you should go into questioning and listening mode, and respond to the interviewer's cues.

6. Lamenting your difficult job search

Even if you've been on a long job-search slog, find a way to make it sound positive, as though you took a sabbatical by choice and you've enjoyed your time meeting with many different contacts.

7. Being honest about your weaknesses

The rhetoric of job interviews should be sunshine and light. You can talk about a challenge you overcame, but emphasize your accomplishment rather than the problem that preceded it.

8. Saying how much money you want to make

Lots of people get anxious about money and bring it up in the first interview. This is a mistake, say coaches. If you are asked about your salary requirement, you can say, "money is important to me but at this point in my career, fit is the primary issue." Avoid being the first to name a number.

9. Getting impatient with the process

Know that hiring decisions can drag on for months. Pestering your contacts repeatedly by phone and email will not speed up the process.

10. Spending all your time answering ads and sending out blind résumés

Longtime job coach Ellis Chase says this is "the number one, catastrophic job search mistake." People don't get jobs through blind applications, but rather through networking and people they know.