

By Rob Ridout

Attitude is key to the right career move

Most people will be moving jobs quite a few times during their careers, yet most job hunters find the job market a daunting black hole. Career coach and CV writer Rob Ridout shares his advice.

It all starts with being an opportunist. Generally we enter the market with a victim mentality, not sure if we are really going to find that ideal role and/or ideal company.

Candidates are also extremely negative about all the players in the recruitment industry, including recruiters and headhunters. Remember that all these participants make significant amounts of money placing you, and therefore have a very strong opportunistic attitude. So why shouldn't you too?

I often find that a negative attitude is down to poor confidence, especially when entering the job market. I also find that there may be some hidden issues – such as previous bad career moves that show in a CV. So what? Most candidates will have made a bad move at some point. Get over it!

When you move into the market you need to be pumped and ready to roll. Your strategy should be focused and assertive, bordering on aggressive. This, I realise, is difficult for most.

One of the first proactive measures you should take when entering the market is to be prepared. Get your brand material in order, make sure that your CV, cover letter and LinkedIn profile all look the part. Remember, all of these documents represent your personal brand and they should tell a story to the reader.

Secondly, get your story right. You are not going to be able to move through the interview quagmire if you don't have a good story to sell or tell. Your story should flow and you should be prepared to answer the hard questions. So get practising.

Thirdly, get all your background checks sorted, call your references, have your salary details together and all your qualification checks on hand.

Ready to get going

Now get going. Don't be shy. Most candidates immediately hit the brakes and become an auditor when considering roles – specifications are scrutinised, companies are over-analysed and recruiters are avoided.

But the specifications that candidates view typically come from two sources – either from a recruiter or the company.

Recruiters always rewrite their specifications as they don't want their competitors to know who they are working

with. Most recruiters do not get the brief from the actual company line manager, so the specifications that you are provided with are often a thin version of the original. Therefore, it should not be used to really make a decision about whether you want to go for an interview or not.

Then you have the company specification. Most job specifications are outdated and were often last updated when the incumbent who had occupied the role, started in the role. I am yet to be convinced that the HR practitioner who is tasked with finding the person to fill this role totally understands the role and sometimes even the company's selling points.

The point is that the specification you are seeing is usually not actually the entire picture, and often not focused on the real essence of the role. This information can only be gained from meeting the actual line manager or a well-seasoned HR practitioner during a face-to-face interview.

Here is the bottom line: If you as the candidate

discount roles based on specifications, you may be overlooking roles that are great just because the person who brokered the specification has not done so correctly.

So look at the specification with an opportunistic eye. Rather go to the interview and find out for yourself whether the role is for you.

Continue going for lots of interviews; this will provide you with great practice.

Success is not attained through a successful shortlisting; you need to make it to the interview with the employer and preferably the decision-maker. So you will need to throw yourself into the market and create opportunities.

Remember that the final decision on whether or not to take an offer lies with you. At the end of the day, you don't have to sign the offer. Don't take a conservative attitude to going for interviews and rob yourself of the right to make that decision.

Research! Research! Research!

I meet many candidates who complain about making a bad move. The normal complaints range from bad corporate culture to working in a role that was sold to them incorrectly.

The truth is that employers really do not want to employ the wrong person. Unfortunately, many

companies still fail at the most basic recruitment exercises and then blame the recruiter.

I unapologetically place the blame squarely with the candidate. If you join a company and you have not done your research, you cannot blame anybody but yourself. This sounds harsh, but with the massive amount of information available on social media platforms there is no boundary as to what information you can find.

So how do you do this?

LinkedIn can be used to not only gather information about your interviewers but also about the incumbent who occupied the role that you are being interviewed for. Important information to look for includes the average time of employment within the company and specifically of employees working in departments that you are being interviewed for.

You can also profile whether or not employees have been promoted or moved laterally in the organisation. Also look at where the management team have been employed from and how long these leaders have been employed in the company. This is really 007's playground. It is up to you to use the information.

Remember that this information can also be used in preparation for your interview process; just don't give the interviewer the impression that you are a stalker.

Don't be shy to apply

I see many candidates that are concerned about prostituting themselves. This problem is for CEOs only. There is no big brother watching us and nobody is keeping notes. So just get on with it. We are all very green on the interview subject early in our careers, so you should start to create a constructive regime regarding your interview strategy and this can only be done by going for interviews.

It takes only one thing in your CV to impress a hiring manager and spark an interview request. So logically, if your CV is not informative to the reader, you stand no chance.

It is important to note that there is a massive shift towards total career changes. Even though many South African companies have been slow to react, I see more and more candidates moving between industry sectors and engaging new sectors and new roles with subtle links to their previous roles.

I think this trend will continue, especially as our economy moves ahead with the emergence of small and medium-sized businesses. This is very important when highlighting the necessity to not be shy to apply. Few companies will advertise that they are looking for a person with strong transferable skills as they would rather get an ideal candidate. So again, it will work in your favour to be aggressive and apply where you can and to join the dots in your cover letter.

Of course there is no need to be ridiculous and apply for everything that crosses your path. But your strategy should really be quite simple – for goodness' sake, apply! ■ editorial@finweek.co.za

Rob Ridout has 25 years of head-hunting experience and assists clients as career coach and CV writer.

Congratulations to Thomas Hope, who won a book prize in one of our recent giveaways. Well done! This week a lucky reader can win a copy of Moroka Modiba's *Think Yourself Rich: A Step-by-Step Guide to Financial Independence*. To be entered into the draw, complete the online version of this quiz, which will be available on

- In which Southern African country were two large diamonds found recently?
- True or false? Amazon's new grocery store is called Amazon Go.
- Who is the president of Liberia (and also a former footballer)?
- Who is the ANC's secretary-general?
- Steinhoff recently sold a stake in another company, raising R7.1bn. Which business was it?
- PSG Group
- True or false? North Korea and South Korea will march under one flag at the upcoming Winter Olympics.
- Which country's flag does not feature the colour yellow?
- True or false? As featured in the 18 January edition of *Finweek*, Munching Mongoose is a George-based restaurant.
- What is the name of Africa's tallest residential skyscraper?

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

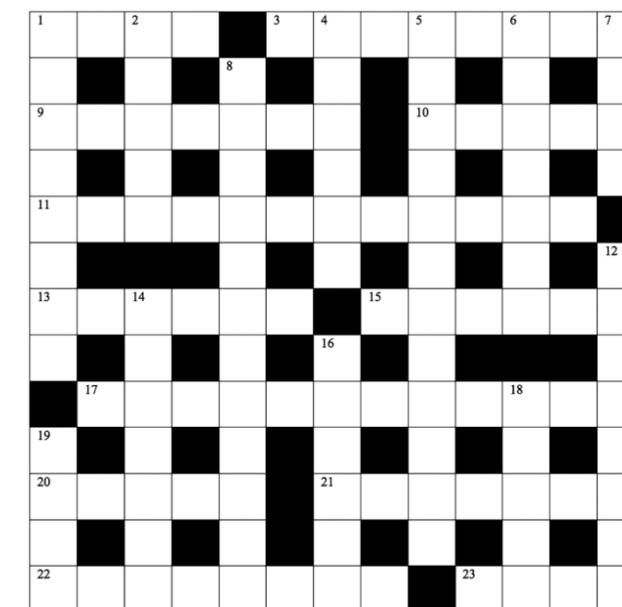
NO 701JD

ACROSS

- An Eskimo living here? (4)
- Obama's uneasy in new eating place (5,3)
- Right in an illegal position (7)
- Open it up in June, having got the tip-off (5)
- Speaking jointly? (12)
- Soldiers lead me to those in power (6)
- Some sort of stain or children's colouring agent (6)
- Waved away cattle guides (12)
- Stranger caught in an untruth (5)
- Unaware shutter not quite closed (5,2)
- Golfer's watchfulness approaching the green? (5,3)
- Succulent noise from a cow, we hear (4)

DOWN

- Marital vow by which the French prove devotion (8)
- Having fun twisting it out of shape (5)
- Point to unwanted ship loss (6)
- Bar demand for charge by defendant against plaintiff (12)
- Engage foreign character as rubbish collector (7)
- There's game back in the tall grass (4)
- Event accompanied by pomp? (12)
- Happy flowers come with love to me (8)
- Getting on sort of gingerly outside the law (7)
- It's despicable being close to a blackleg (6)
- Of course, this starts the Irish day at Liverpool (5)
- Getting around again without a stick (4)



Solution to Crossword NO 701JD

ACROSS: 4 Affront; 8 Aortal; 9 Crystal; 10 Dreary; 11 Nestle; 12 Staplers; 18 Incident; 20 Avoids; 21 Appear; 22 Preside; 23 Scheme; 24 Cogency
DOWN: 1 Caddish; 2 Freeway; 3 Barrel; 5 Forensic; 6 Resist; 7 Neatly; 13 Episodic; 14 Referee; 15 Starter; 16 Overdo; 17 Tissue; 19 Impact

