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Attitude Shift

Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude. –Zig Ziglar

Individuals in job search are usually in their uncomfortable zone. When people are laid off, they might be angry, disappointed, worried, etc. When people decide to do an active search while they still have a job, it commonly means they're fed up with their situation. Their issues are so intense that they are willing to give up security to make a change. This is significant because, for most of us, change is the last thing we want. If it's bad enough, though, many of us will welcome the fear of the unknown over living with the pain. Even those who are excited about making a change by, say, moving to a new city or by graduating from school can view the situation with an underlying anxiety because of the uncertainty factor. Then, let's not forget about the rejection aspect when the job search has gone on and on, and there's still no offer on the horizon. Not fun to have all that stress. As a matter of fact, in all the years I've spent as a recruiter, I can't really remember anyone coming to me saying, "Gosh, I'm so excited about this job search adventure. It's so much fun!"

They say that looking for a new job ranks up there with the kind of stress you experience when you go through divorce, bereavement, and selling/buying a home. I don't know about you, but I think we should add raising teenagers to that list!

I know about the stress of your job search because I've seen it from different angles. I've lived it personally, and I've helped many souls through it. The good news is that it doesn't have to be so bad. There are things you can do immediately to supercharge your search, feel more empowered and produce results.

While sharing the information in this book with job seekers, I'm often told things like, "Wow, I've never thought of things this way." Or, "The way you put that – it makes much more sense to me now." I sit down with them, and we go through the exercises in the form of an in-depth interview. Naturally, I'm hoping to earn a fee from placing them with my client companies, but more and more often I've noticed that they'll find a job quickly on their own. Working together with these processes gets them to a point where they become more savvy in their search.

Afterward, they go out and begin to recognize opportunities that fit what they want, and time after time I get that inevitable phone call saying they've found the right job on their own before I can place them!

At first I dismissed the idea when several people suggested I write a book about what I've been doing. But over time, I've realized that this clarity and focus that job seekers gain when we work together could and should be shared with a broader audience. It took about four years or so, during my busy recruiting career, for me to bring all the concepts together into book format. In 2007, I developed a workshop called *Get A Job Now!*, which helped to further hone the information. I continue to see the transformative nature of shifting attitudes in the job seekers who attend the workshops.

All along, I knew this chapter would be absolutely necessary to include in the book. Attitude is a critical factor in the success of just about anything we do, and it's especially important in the job search. Over the years, I've observed many candidates get a job because they showed a lot of enthusiasm and passion even when they didn't possess every qualification listed on the job description. On the flipside, I've seen many good people miss out on great jobs because they sabotaged the interview due to fear, unresolved issues, lack of confidence, lack of personal vision or all of the above!

It's time for you to slow down and consider your attitude for just a little while. How are you doing in this area? Before you go out there and start selling the concept of you, you need to be sure you are delivering the concept of you with authentic enthusiasm. Having clarity and focus will certainly help your attitude because you'll have more confidence, but be sure and check in periodically on your attitude. You'll need it to be strong so you can remain persistent and unflagging during the tough spots.

My Personal Career Disaster

I noted earlier that I have lived the stress, too. I can empathize! Many years ago, I left a company which had been good about training me but could not provide any further advancement. Back then, I wasn't using any of the techniques I have since learned and am sharing with you in this book. I made a knee-jerk decision and took an offer with a new firm, full of high hopes. However, after just two months, I realized I'd made a poor decision. I had different values and different goals than my team. They measured success by bonuses, while I

measured success by making a difference with customers. I wasn't as wise then, and I stayed there struggling for eleven months. Fluctuating between trying to force myself to fit into their culture and trying to change their outlook by butting heads with management, I was miserable. They must have realized it, and, before I had the chance to quit, they gave me two weeks severance pay and terminated me. Even though I wasn't happy there, when they fired me, I was crushed and angry. It caused me to question my abilities and my career path. Fortunately, it didn't take me long to adjust that attitude, and, to this day, I believe getting fired from that place was one of the best things that ever happened in my career. I was able to choose my next job well, and, indeed, it was one of the best I'd ever had because I knew exactly what I did *not* want when I picked them. With this clarity also came a deep appreciation of what I gained with my new team. They were wonderful. To this day some of those former colleagues are enduring friends.

Once I shifted the pain of the event by becoming philosophical, I saw being terminated this way – I'm better equipped to work with individuals who have been laid off or who have been let go for being in the wrong job. My philosophy is that when a bad thing happens, there must be something in it to learn from or to apply to the rest of my life's journey. Call it a spiritual outlook if you will, but, to me, it's my positive spin on what could be viewed as a negative situation. To me, it's common sense to make such an attitude adjustment. It helps me stay focused on how to reap the results of my work efforts.

The Attitude Shift Pattern

What happened to me, and what I see time and time again with the folks I help, is what I call the *Attitude Shift Pattern*. Here's how it typically shows up... A person comes to see me, confidence low and negative about the job search. In needing to figure out why they keep failing, something or someone has to be blamed. "It must be (fill-in-the-blank) why no one is hiring me." The reason can't be something as simple as competition for jobs is high or that maybe it's time to try something else. Instead, I hear things like, "I think it's my age" or "I'm sure I didn't get that job because I'm a woman." One person told me it was her weight, and she was not even close to being obese.

I'm not denying that discrimination is alive out there. I know it exists because I have received specific requests to send a woman for the front desk, a strong man to unload a truck or a recent college grad to fit in with a certain team. Whatever the case, I just remind them that I'll help

them hire the best qualified candidates regardless of their age, sex, gender or religion. If that doesn't work, I'll decline to work with them, and so should you. To the job seeker I say this... it doesn't matter if you think they won't hire you because you're young, old, male, female, etc. Let that be their problem, not yours! Go in and prove yourself. Be energetic, positive, and indispensable. If they still won't hire you, they will be the ones missing out on the wonderfulness you can bring to their workplace. Besides, you don't want to work for people that close-minded anyway!

Please take heart. Know that for every one of those unenlightened hiring managers, there are many more who don't discriminate. Just as the best company leaders notice and reward the attitudes of individuals who work for them, hiring managers notice the candidate's personality during the hiring process. People hire people with a can-do attitude, and I can vouch for the fact that all the skills in the world won't make the hiring manager budge like a good personality fit will.

Attitude Shift Empowerment

When the shift occurs from negative to positive, the positive attitude tends to attract positive things and events just like the negative attitude attracted negative prior to the shift. You go from stagnation or backward movement to forward progression. Suddenly, there are multiple job interviews to schedule. A job offer or two shows up.

Is this simply the law of attraction all the motivational gurus are talking about? One could probably make a good case for that, but in order to really get the job you want, it takes more than being vaguely aware of this intangible energy stuff. It takes an active awareness of your attitude and engagement in shifting it.

At the heart of whatever you attract to yourself is your attitude. Consider the possibility that the reason things open up for you is because you let go of some baggage. Where there was previously an emotional blockage, you now have clarity. You can see opportunities where you did not see them before, and so there seems to be more of them coming your way.

Has this ever happened to you? You walk into a room where someone is laughing. You can't help but smile in spite of the fact that you have absolutely no idea what's so funny. That's because attitude is contagious. If our attitudes can be contagious to each other, why can't our

attitudes be contagious to *ourselves*? If you've ever made the conscious decision to choose your attitude, you know what I mean.

My husband once took a Dale Carnegie course, and I was allowed to observe one evening. Things were pretty calm until midway through the lesson when the whole class stood up and shouted several times, "Act enthusiastic and you'll be enthusiastic!" The energy was palpable – suddenly, everyone came alive!

Obviously, this “acting it to be it” strategy is not something new. Today scientists are proving how this and other strategies to change thinking patterns can actually physically change the brain. ✨

✨ **Good Stuff To Know:** *Using brain scan technology in his work treating obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), Dr. Jeffrey M. Schwartz, research psychiatrist at the School of Medicine at the University of California at Los Angeles, has documented how the neural connections in the brain physically change when thought patterns change. In their article, “Lead Your Brain Instead Of Letting It Lead You”, Stephanie West Allen and Jeffrey M. Schwartz state:*

Acting as if you have a trait causes both brain changes and chemical changes throughout the body. Therefore "acting as if" with attention to what you are doing is a very powerful technique for altering and mastering behavior.

Before neuroscience had proven that brain changes are created by behavior accompanied by full attention, the great acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavski knew this intuitively. Stanislavski worked with his students to help them convincingly act their roles. He believed that a person cannot experience a feeling on command but the actor can evoke the feeling by willfully experiencing what he called "antecedents" to that feeling. Antecedents are actions.

If those with OCD can learn to change their behavior, then there's a clear precedent that you can change your attitude and even change perceptions about who you are. In doing so, you are actually changing physical reality – you are actually changing your brain!

In light of the scientific proof of how changing your thinking changes the physical reality of your brain, consider how truly empowered you are. When you've become convinced about something, say, transforming the experience of getting fired into a valuable career lesson, you influence others' attitude about you and, consequently, attract better circumstances into your life.

Within the context of the job search, your shift or change of thinking can occur in different ways. You can be proactive and do something new that you haven't tried. For example, take advantage of a networking opportunity you've been resisting. Take a class to improve your skills or finish your degree. Or what about hiring yourself out as a consultant? The shift can also be some form of surrender. In other words, you could simply say, "Que sera, sera," and open your mind to what will unfold. The act of surrender is very powerful and quite effective. As long as you maintain an optimistic outlook, trusting your path and having faith that things will look up as soon as you let them does really work. I've seen situations when someone just proverbially shrugged their shoulders and opened themselves to possible opportunities they hadn't already considered – doors started opening where they'd been closed before. It really can happen spontaneously if you allow it. After all, you are the one who's in charge of your attitude. Sometimes that's the only thing you can control!

Shift Happens – A True Story

2002 was a bleak time for job security in the U.S. Many start-up businesses had failed, the effects of deregulating the telecommunications industry were being felt, semiconductor manufacturers experienced a long-overdue down cycle and the Enron and WorldCom scandals had broken. The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington had further compounded our economic challenges, leading to the crippling of the travel, tourist and hospitality industries.

It was in the midst of this turmoil that Susan was laid off from a telecom firm and eventually came to see me to get help in her job search. Susan was a professional executive assistant and presented herself very well – stylish, well-groomed, articulate and intelligent. With an excellent résumé, terrific skills and strong credentials, she was a candidate I was excited to help. Then, during our meeting as she got comfortable with me, it happened. The façade broke. Susan poured out her frustration. On top of the disappointment of being let go from a company where

she'd expected to retire, her job search was not going well. For months she sent what seemed like hundreds of résumés and had scored very few interviews and no job offers.

Her conclusion? Because she was in her 50's, no one was interested. Never mind that the market was terrible. Never mind that no one could tell her real age from her résumé or her self-presentation. Susan was obviously in a negative spiral. When I suggested temporary work, she was vehemently opposed to it. "No," she said. "I still have money from my severance package." I suspected she was afraid of further change and possible rejection, and that's what temporary work might represent since assignments inevitably come to an end, too. Additionally, I suspected Susan already had a hang up about her age when she was "thrown out" into the job market. She had what I like to call the *negative invisible cloak*. It was woven with her fear of aging, as well as her anger about being laid off when she was sure this was going to be her last job until retirement. She wore this cloak into her job search, and it sabotaged her. The cloak was supposed to cover her pain, but people sensed that there was something not quite right – something not quite open about her.

You need to understand that seasoned hiring managers have finely honed instincts. They are masters of nonverbal communication. Some may be so perceptive that they'll figure out they're talking to someone wearing a negative invisible cloak covering up some pain underneath. However, many won't really know why they're sensing contradictions, observing discomfort around certain questions or hearing a slight edge of bitterness in the answers. They can't quite put their finger on why they don't want to hire this person in spite of his or her outstanding qualifications. This is why it is imperative that if you have fear, you gain confidence and if you have bitterness, you gain perspective. As I said before, people want to hire people with a can-do attitude, but they also want to hire people who can grow and learn from their career experiences. If you've been burned in your previous job situation, then examine and embrace it. You must shift your attitude and become philosophical about it so you can move on. Be sure to bring a positive, healthy point of view into meetings with your potential next employer.

Ultimately, Susan surrendered – shifted. What she did was allow and accept whatever was going to happen. She simply let go of the baggage of her last job, did her best to keep an open mind and stayed committed to her job search. Then she proactively took advantage of our firm's temporary employment division. She was offered a good-paying, long-term assignment as an executive assistant. She surrendered the notion that she couldn't be valued by an employer

when she took the assignment. You could say she removed an emotional block, and when she opened herself to this new opportunity, more opportunities started coming her way.

Susan called me from her temporary assignment about two weeks after she started. Apparently, she had received three other offers to interview – all in the same week! In the end, she declined those other opportunities in order to stay put. She loved the company and the manager she was supporting at the temporary assignment. Furthermore, they were talking to her about converting her into a permanent staff member.

In giving up resistance to doing temporary work, Susan surrendered to the possibilities. This led to a new manager and company validating her worth as an employee. The really awesome thing is that she also conquered her fear since, clearly, she was *not* too old to be hired after all!

What You Need to Know To Get A Job Now!

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