

Developing Mental Toughness During the Job Search

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The American Sociological Association recently released a study that found that a focus on career and productive job search methods are two of the main ingredients young adults need to get and keep jobs in today's volatile marketplace. There are other factors that determine a person's ability to hold a job, but these two characteristics were found to be particularly key in handling career transitions.

Young adults who focused on their goals, maintained their career aspirations and felt that they controlled their employment situation fared better through the ups and downs of the workplace economy (i.e. they were more likely to be employed) throughout the study's time period.

In other words, those who succeeded were able to keep all the bad news – downsizing, pink slips, outsourcing – in perspective. They were tough.

It is difficult for many job hunters to maintain perspective and develop this "toughness", with all the negative jobs reports and media coverage. According to an ABC/Washington Post poll (conducted in January 2012) 54% of respondents did not feel that the economy had begun to recover. In a CNN/ORC poll (conducted in December 2011) 51% of respondents felt that unemployment is still the most serious issue facing the country today. This is up from 49% in August.

This is the tone of negative information thrown at job seekers.

It is true that there are career obstacles no individual can control; for example, corporate bankruptcies are out of most employees' hands. The trick is to not get swept up in negativity and to learn to deal with rejection. Right now the job market is incredibly competitive, and it has been reported that it takes 7 attempts to get a job.

So how can you gain the toughness needed to stay motivated and ultimately be successful in your job search. Here are four tips:

- 1) Foster realistic expectations. Many successful people have readjusted their career goals – changing schools, earning different degree type or studying different subjects. Success does not come wrapped in the same paper with the same bow and card.
- 2) Understand what aspects of the job search you can and cannot control. This will minimize the angst that arises from lack of certainty and will allow you to exercise more control over your situation. For example, your timeline is not the same as the employer's time. Do diligently follow

up with email or phone calls on the status of your application, but remember, the employer is not sitting by the phone waiting to give you the job offer. They have a business to run. Actively continue your search and participate in other interviews.

3) Do what you can to increase the chances of employment. Look, speak, and behave professionally. Acquire new skills to make yourself more marketable. Anticipate the types of questions you'll be asked and prepare answers ahead of time. Preparation and research goes a long way.

4) After the interview, step back and reflect on the experience. If you did not get the job, take a moment to be disappointed and then move on. Learn what you can from the experience and apply it to the next one.

Remember to focus on what you want to occur, rather than on the things that went wrong. The more interviews you attend, the better you will become at interviewing which will only increase the likelihood of receiving a job offer. Remember, Snelling is here to help. We have a 60 year history of helping people find their best-fit positions. So visit our website to find your [local office](#), where our experienced employees can help you in search.