



Ways in which you may be sabotaging yourself in the job hunt

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Finding a job has never been more difficult in South Africa. The unemployment situation, especially youth unemployment, is at crisis levels. Not everyone is going to find a job, and there is certainly a need to look at starting your own venture. However, not everyone is entrepreneurial, and some people are more suited to working for an employer. Because of the extremely competitive nature of the current situation, if you are looking for a job, it is vital that you do whatever you can to show your best self to potential employers. And this means you need to think about how you write your CV and cover letter, the methods you use to find a job, and how you come across to hiring managers and recruiters in interviews. Based on many years of career coaching the following are some ways in which I have found people stop themselves from getting jobs they would be well suited to.

1. Firstly, you must customise your CV to fit the job requirements. Yes, it is time consuming. It means reworking your CV every time you apply for a job. However, the benefits are immense. The recruiter does not know anything about you. They cannot read your mind or read between the lines. You need to spell out exactly how you meet everything listed as requirements in the job description. You also need to do this because in many instances the first reading of your CV is by a machine or junior people who know nothing about the job you are applying for. They are searching for keywords. As an example, a client of mine applied for a job and wrote in her CV that she had advanced Excel. The job description indicated you need experience with pivot tables. Her reasoning was surely they know that advanced Excel includes pivot tables. Well, the first people screening your CV might not know. They are searching for the words "pivot tables" in your CV. And if they are not there you will be thrown out of the first round of screening. So be absolutely specific and write in your CV everything you have that is in the job description, and preferably include the same words. Eventually a short list of CV's will reach the manager looking for the person and there they will look for a bit more. So also add in other information that will be advantageous to the position. As an absolute minimum you must write in what you have, that is required for the job. Then if you really do want the job, add in some really good accomplishments.
2. The second problem is that people don't write their CV in terms of what they can do for the company. They don't write their CV from the perspective of what a hiring manager will be looking for. When you write your CV imagine that you are the recruiter or hiring manager. Think about what you want to see in a potential candidate. When you write your CV talk about what you have done in the past and how this has prepared you to add value to the company. For example, "my experience and success in brand

management enables me to do..... for your company". Don't just list what you can do. List how you could add value to their company. Companies want to hire people who have as their focus – "This is what I can do for you".

3. Another problem is that people write CV's using jargon like, "great communication skills". If you are going to say that then you must back it up with an example. For instance, have a bullet point explaining how you resolved a dispute and got a project back on track, or how you got divergent stakeholders to come together and agree on a way forward. The reader of your CV must be able to discern from your CV that you have great communication skills. You can't just say you have them and expect the reader to believe it. Anybody can, and in fact most people say they have great communication skills. And most hiring managers know that most people in fact don't really have great communication skills. You must be able to show, when describing your work experience, that you do in fact have those skills.
4. Please don't make your CV too long and don't fill it with tons and tons of arbitrary information. People are busy. There are hundreds of CV's received for most positions. Recruiters are not going to spend a long time paging through your CV to see if you meet the job requirements. They will scan your CV for about 7 seconds. In that time they will decide whether or not you seem a potential hire. Keep the CV short, highlight key areas where you want the reader's eye to go to. And keep the information in your CV absolutely relevant for the job. You want someone scanning your CV to decide quickly that you are someone who would be suitable for the job.
5. You can overdo the information you provide. I have seen CV's where the list of skills/competencies listed in the CV is over fifty. Now you might actually have all of those skills, however, it comes across as if you just did a dump of all sorts of words from a list. Be selective. Keep the information short and relevant to the job. At a glance the reader must be able to pick up that you meet the job requirements. Your list of competencies in your CV should be restricted to what you are particularly good at, and what is listed as requirements in the job description that you have.
6. And finally, remember that recruiters and hiring managers assume you will do the job the same way you do the job hunt. If you are sloppy, careless, and lazy, it will show in your CV and job application and they will make the assumption that you are probably going to be sloppy, careless, and lazy on the job. Your CV and the way you handle the job hunt, including all the people you deal with in the process, shows who you are. And prospective employers use this information to guide them in making their decisions. They need to see that you have taken care, taken initiative, considered their needs, and explained how you can help them. The more work you put into your CV and job hunt, the more it will show, and the more positively recruiters and hiring managers will view you.

Because finding a job can be such a long and difficult and demoralising process, it is easy to lose hope and give up. It is easy to start thinking, "I will never find a job / the job I like / I am not employable". It is easy to get into a downward and depressed cycle. Job hunting has always been about persistence and numbers, even when the economy and employment rate were a lot better. So, you just have to keep at it. Keep looking for positions, keep sending in applications, keep learning where and how you can improve your process, and keep networking. Most jobs are filled by people known to someone in the company that is hiring, so the wider and more diverse your network the better you are likely to fare.

If you do start to feel really demoralised, take a few days off and then start again. It will take time. Getting a job will require you to be persistent, continually engaging with people and working your contacts, and learning and improving how you do all aspects of the job hunt as you go along.