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Perpetual Career Management: It's Not An Option

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According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary to insure is to make certain, especially by taking necessary measures and precautions. Why is it that we are in the insurance business, but we often overlook safeguarding our own careers?

No matter how secure you feel in your current situation or how much you love your employer and your role in that organization, remember jobs are temporary. You cannot predict the future; an unforeseen circumstance could be right around the bend. Maybe, your job is so stimulating because of your great boss, but what happens if your boss accepts a role with another company and you are left with a bad replacement. Or, maybe your company decides to relocate to a less expensive office in the suburbs, which translates into too long of a commute for you.

You must be prepared to find work immediately, if necessary. Don't find yourself stuck without a well thought-out plan and a well-stocked job search tool kit. Even if you've recently been hired, always be on the look out. Continually seek the perfect situation or else it will become too easy to just settle and stay where you are.

The best advice for remaining active in your job search is to set aside one night per month to really work your career plan and to make sure that it is reflective of where you are and where you want to go. You only need a few hours to review and update your career map and job search materials. Plan ahead for this critical activity by reserving a date on your calendar. Reviewing your career plan should become as routine as giving your pet its heartworm pill.

Following this simple checklist will keep you on track as you renew your plan.

- ❑ **Update your resume.** Making additions to your resume when they are fresh in your mind allows you to produce more thorough descriptions.
 - ❑ Have your current job responsibilities broadened?
 - ❑ Have you attended a new class or seminar?
 - ❑ Have you received an honor or reward?
 - ❑ Have you joined a new association or group?
- ❑ **Re-evaluate your goals.** Review your short and long-term goals. This is a great way to refresh your memory on your career action plan and the steps you need to take to get to the next career building block.
 - ❑ Have you accomplished any goals since last month? If so, check them off your list and add a new goal in its place. You may also want to reward yourself; celebrate the completion of your goal by going out to dinner.
 - ❑ Have any of your goals changed due to new requirements or developments in your field? Update as appropriate.
 - ❑ Has anything happened at work or in your personal life that may cause you to rethink your career direction? If so, this is a good time to revamp your career plan and rewrite your goals.
- ❑ **Add new accomplishments to your success stories journal.** Writing down your achievements as they happen will allow you to describe them in more detail. Remember the purpose of this record is to jog your memory before an interview, allowing you to more clearly demonstrate how you can add value to an organization.



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□ **Review your networking list.**

- Have you made new industry contacts since last month; if so, add them to your networking contact list.
- Did a contact share some interesting news with you regarding their personal life or recent accomplishments? Make a note of such information; they will be pleasantly surprised and flattered when you bring it up the next time you speak with them. If appropriate, send a congratulatory card or a thinking of you note.
- Is there anyone on your networking list that you haven't had contact with in the past 90 days? If so, make the effort to send a letter or an email or to call them in the upcoming week.

□ **Conduct a quick job search.**

- Scan the help wanted ads. Though this is not a true assessment of the marketplace since most openings are not posted, it will still give you a better picture of the possibilities, as well as the current market salary for your role.
- Visit your ideal organization's website and review their job ads.
- If there is an ad that appeals to you, send your resume. Be careful not to send your resume off in every direction though; be picky.

Professionals who continually manage their careers find themselves traveling through their career maps quicker and to more fulfilling results. And, should the unexpected occur, they are also more likely to have success finding a job quickly. Career management should be an ongoing process; successful job hunting abilities require monthly training. The longer you go without tending to these skills, the harder it will be to catch back up.