

Confront the Myths that Hold You Back In Your Career

By
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Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right!
-Henry Ford

Have you ever been afraid to ask for the job you wanted because you believed that asking for it might limit your opportunities? Told yourself you didn't have enough experience? Thought "If I only knew the right people"? If you said yes, then one or more myths about the way things work has been impacting on your results. But what exactly is a myth?

Webster's defines myth as an unproved or unexamined belief that is used to justify an action or result. Let's look at three common career myths.

The myth of opportunity

Take the job market, for example. It's a common myth that being definitive about what you want could limit your opportunities. That's just not true. In fact, if you don't ask for what you want, your chances are zero for getting it. Opportunity comes through other people so you have to help them to help you. Doors will fly open when you learn *how* to ask for what you want. Here's an example.

Lisa was 27, had just earned her Masters degree and was having a tough time finding a job. In fact, the first time I asked her what kind of work she was looking for, she couldn't really tell me. Her resume was crammed with information but it wasn't organized to help a recruiter (or me) get what she was looking for. Lisa was hoping as so many people do that someone reviewing her credentials would spot her obvious worth and point her in the right direction. Answering a few simple questions quickly got her focused and happily describing what she wanted in precise detail. Soon after she had a bold headline that captured the essence of her ideal job. She then drilled her goal down to one sentence that she memorized so she would always be ready when someone asked, "Tell me Lisa, what do you want to do?" Once Lisa was willing to ask for what she wanted, an enormous burst of energy was released. A flood of creative ideas about where her ideal job might be began to take over the job seeking process. Soon she had narrowed down a list of target companies and could brainstorm different strategies for getting in.

The myth of experience

You probably already have at least some experience doing what you want to do but may not realize it. In Lisa's case, she wanted to work as a research analyst for a high profile non-profit organization in a large northeastern city. "I don't have enough experience", she said. "My friend (and former classmate) Jane works there and all she could get was a

job as an administrative assistant.” In fact, Lisa had a wealth of experience through her graduate work and overseas travel and volunteer work plus she could speak three languages! Changing how she thought about that experience and repositioning it on her resume helped her embrace the strategy we developed to get her in front of people who could hire or help her get hired there. Even if you don’t have as much experience as a job requires, a great attitude and a willingness to learn can often overcome that.

The myth of connections

You already know or could connect with anyone in the world if you wanted to. That’s because there really are only six degrees of separation. (If you know only 25 people who don't know each other, and they know 25 people who don't know each other, in six steps the progression totals the world population.) Remember Lisa’s friend Jane? It wasn’t until we were looking at how to get Lisa into her target company that she remembered she knew someone there. A conversation with Jane in which Lisa asked a series of key questions about that company, gave Lisa the information she needed to increase her chances for an interview. And, she figured out how to avoid the trap Jane had fallen into by taking a job that wasn’t what she really wanted.

Knowledge is power! Confront the myths that are holding you back to increase your chances for success.

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