Building a Career Plan to Land Your Dream Job by Dagobert Coleman

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Landing your dream job is something many of us hope for. However, some of us are trying to land any job just to pay the rent or the mortgage; a dream job can seem so elusive. The recent recession and daunting unemployment figures, (roughly 16% for AfricanAmericans versus 9.1% nationally) have left many people discouraged and demoralized. But don't be a statistic. Learn how to always be in control of your destiny and land that dream job, over and over again.

Consider your long term career goals

As a former executive recruiter, I watched many a professional sit back and wait to be called by a recruiter or employer believing that if they did good work, they'd be rewarded with their "dream job." Fact is, your dream job doesn't just "happen", you have to make it happen. It also shouldn't happen only once. As you move through your career, you need to think of each job you have as a "dream job" which gives you the skills and exposure to take you to the next one. What challenges and satisfies you when you are coming out of college won't likely hold your interest when you are 35 or 50.

There is no "onesizefitsall approach" to finding your dream job. Don't compare yourself to your friends, or attempt to satisfy someone else's vision of what you should do for a living. Certainly don't be bound by what you studied in school, even professional or graduate school. This is no one else's dream but yours. Only you know what you are suited for. The only trick is you need to reassess your skills, preferences and other characteristics at every stage of your life in order to design your dream for yourself by yourself. Exercise your choice and don't settle for less; don't wait to be chosen, you choose.

Map your own career path

In my book, Career Mapping: Charting Your Course in the New World of Work, I espouse a "free agency" mentality in which you are never a victim, but the creator of your own destiny. This mentality or mindset gives you the ability to create your own job opportunities. Much like LeBron James and Derrick Rose, you need to know your worth and only consider employers that are worthy of your talents. Here are some practical tips to make sure you are on course to landing your dream job:

1.Plot your industries, functions and roles Include all the ones you've worked in historically. Determine 23 aspirational industries, functions and roles, some of which might be where you've already been.

2.Build your prototype roles Research different job descriptions online; cut and paste to create 23 ideal roles that align with the 23 functions and industries you've selected. Being able to articulate titles, responsibilities and competencies helps you when rÃ©sumÃ© writing, networking and interviewing.

3.Assess your competencies These are the portable skills that are uniquely yours. Be introspective enough to also assess the gaps between your current competencies and those required for your 23 prototype jobs (download "Your Career Map").

4.Approach companies - Build a list of companies based on your selected industries, and determine which companies you can approach for one of your prototype jobs, whether or not they have a current opening.

5.Leverage your network Build a robust list of business contacts with the 8 types of people who need to be in your network (see Career Mapping book). Tap these people for introductions into your target companies to secure an interview. Apply online as a last resort.

6.Take help - Utilize online career assessment tools or take career gudance from experts to make sure that you are taking the right steps on your career development path.

Getting the interview is the first big realization of that dream job. Learn from each interview what about the industry, company and role really appeal to you. Update your targets as you discern your preferences and competencies. Whether you are currently employed or not, this process ensures that you are in the driver's seat, a true free agent ready to land your dream job, again and again.

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