

Your job hunt should never end

Even if you're happy, you should keep investigating

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You're happy with your job, the pay is fine and your career has reached a nice plateau -- now don't forget to keep looking for something new.

"I wish more people understood that they need to always be looking for work, no matter how happy they are," said Anthony Kaul, founder of Vancouver-based higherbracket.ca, an online job board for executives.

"You are irresistible when you're happily employed. Passive job seeking is part of an overall career management strategy."

Passive job seeking involves connecting with people in your industry and staying visible in your work, whether you are a CEO, nurse or pool cleaner, Kaul said.

Networking is an essential component of a career plan, but the idea makes the introverted shudder.

"There are so many ways people could be networking, and it doesn't mean charging around shaking hands and handing out business cards," he said.

Getting involved, or organizing, a company charity event -- and challenging a competitor to join -- will connect you with top-level managers at your own workplace as well as with the competition. Joining your industry's associations and attending events will also keep you in touch with your profession.

Internal networking is important too, Kaul said.

Join a few task forces or groups so you can meet people from other departments. And volunteering in the community is another way to connect with others who may remember your passion for charity work.

"Most wealthy, successful people give back somehow, and if you want to meet them, volunteer -- and it feels good too."

Kaul also counsels people to disseminate their expertise. Blogging, writing papers on topics where you have developed particular knowledge, or submitting articles to trade publications will increase your visibility.

"People don't think they have expertise, but they do," he said. "If you clean pools for a living, you know things about how to keep the water clean that others would find



CREDIT: Les Bazso, The Province

Ian Christie is a career coach and president of BoldCareer, which counsels his clients on career strategies.

interesting."

Vancouver career coach Ian Christie said passive job-seeking allows individuals to decide when a career move works best rather than waiting until there's no choice.

"I'm not saying you should keep jumping around, but it doesn't hurt to listen to opportunities," said Christie, founder of career services firm boldcareer.com. "You have the most leverage when you don't need a job."

Focusing on your current job is a good work trait, but it shouldn't mean forgetting about other possibilities. Keeping in touch with recruiters to hear about opportunities, even if you're not interested, is a good strategy to stay connected with the market.

"People have a tendency to ignore their position in the market once they're employed," Christie said. "Basically they become invisible. Then, if they suddenly become unhappy or they're forced to make a change, they have to start from scratch."

Developing a career plan is a critical first step before embarking on a passive job search, he said.

It doesn't have to be highly detailed, but you should know what's important to you, career-wise. These days, moving up the ladder is not as important to people as in the past. Instead, they may be more interested in developing specialized skills, having a variety of experiences or reaching personal goals.

"A career plan is really more about understanding what a career is to you, then doing some homework about what you can offer employers: your strengths, where you might fit, what drives you and your ideal environment.

"It all sounds basic, but a lot of people don't do this work," he said. "Getting clear about who you are professionally is a smart investment."

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