



International Leadership Institute

Dedicated to leadership development since 1985



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ILI, in Prague and Florida
PO Box 950-788
Lake Mary, FL 32795-0788
publications @ili.cc

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CAREERS

Being your own Career Counselor

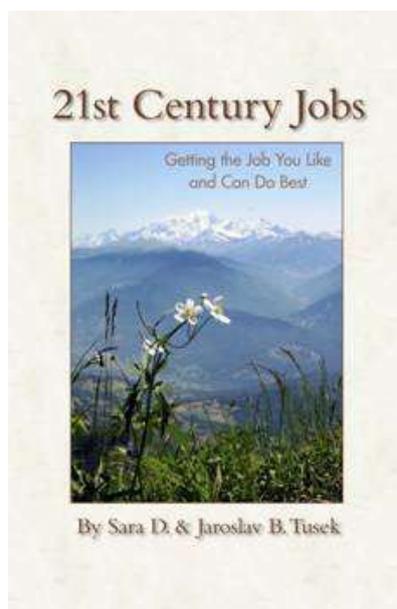
In many ways, looking for a job is a lonely process. You can share your search with friends, but most likely they won't really be as involved or interested in the intricacies of career development as you are forced to be.

You can hire a career counselor or go through a career development seminar, either with professional guidance or as a "self-help" group. In fact, I am in favor of getting professional help. But I know from experience that many people will resist doing so, for reasons of cost ("I have no extra funds for such luxuries as a career counselor when I don't even have a job!"), reluctance to work at their career search ("I just want a job; I don't have time for all this other stuff. Just get me a job."), shyness ("I don't want to tell you what I really want to do, or what's holding me back; it's too personal") or simple lack of resources ("I don't know any career counselors!").

Torn between annoying your friends with your single-minded focus on getting a job and finding a competent career counselor, you may feel disheartened. One solution is to be your own career counselor.

By the Book

You can buy a book on career development with no great difficulty. The 1970's Richard Bolles classic, *What Color is Your Parachute?*, is available in dozens of editions, including, no doubt, an e-book. My husband and I have written our own book, for the "21st Century Jobs" career development seminars we run.



You can read the book, do the exercises and evaluate your own skills, talents, values, abilities, dreams, goals and mission in life. You can learn from the book how to research industries, companies and jobs; how to network effectively; how to follow up on job leads; how to interview successfully; how to handle job offers; how to begin your new job. To p. 2

Being your own career counselor

(from p. 1)



Polasek Gardens in Florida



International Leadership Institute

WAS FOUNDED IN 1985 IN
PRINCETON, NJ

DEDICATED TO HELPING
PEOPLE DEVELOP AND USE
LEADERSHIP SKILLS

OFFERS PERSONALIZED &
EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES TO
ENHANCE LEADERSHIP,
CAREER, AND ENGLISH
LANGUAGE SKILL
DEVELOPMENT IN THE US
AND IN EUROPE

HAS RUN MORE THAN 90
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
AND LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
IN THE US, FOR EUROPEAN
CLIENTS

HAS PARTNERED WITH THE US
DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH FLORIDA, THE
JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND MORE
THAN 780 OTHER
BUSINESSES,
UNIVERSITIES, RELIGIOUS
ORGANIZATIONS, PRIVATE
CITIZENS AND
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Where you Might Need Help

In theory, you can do all the work on your own, if you have the sufficient motivation, emotional reserves and energy. However, you may find that this is not possible for you. In my 27 years of career counseling, I have met people who, when I give them one bit of information, can take it from there and do it all on their own. But most people need much more encouragement, challenging suggestions and guidance during the entire process, and would not be good candidates to be their own career counselor. It depends on where you may fall on that spectrum whether or not you can be your own career counselor.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Group

The insights and reactions of other people, either a career counselor or fellow group members, can help you get past any blind spots you may have about your career strengths or weaknesses. The contributions of other people concerning their own career development process can change your perspective; as you listen to others' stories, you may find that your own ideas become more clear.

When you are your own career counselor, you lose the synergy that a group offers. When people talk about their careers, they tend to get emotional. The passions aroused by such discussions are quite energizing!

And that's the disadvantage, of course. Sharing your career woes and triumphs with another person, or a group of people, calls for courage and a kind of mental toughness (the job search, coincidentally, calls for the same qualities). You may find it highly uncomfortable when someone points out the inconsistencies of what you are saying and doing, but it's only by looking yourself (flaws and all) squarely in the face that you can plan an effective job search. You need to know how you come across to others and adjust accordingly, if your attitude is not "job-worthy."



What's your choice?

Looking for a job starts out as a small, simple task, or so it might seem. But before you know it, you are inventorying your life, searching for hidden gems of dreams, skills, talents and experiences that can be exchanged for a new job, one that you like and can do best. If you have extraordinary guts and steely determination, you can be your own career counselor. If you're like the rest of us, you may just find that you need some help. It's your choice, and your life, so choose wisely!