

Job Seekers' Guide To Career Changes

Making Or Mulling A Switch? *Early Show* Financial Contributor Vera Gibbons Offers Pointers

(CBS) Finding a job in these trying times can be daunting, to say the least -- whether you're unemployed or just want out of your current position.

Many people are being forced to contemplate changing careers, or are in the midst of actually doing it.

On *The Early Show* Wednesday, financial contributor **Vera Gibbons** offered advice to actual and possible career switchers:

For starters, you need to have a good supply of self-confidence. Especially if you've lost your job, you may not be feeling great about yourself, your abilities or your prospects. That's going to cut into your motivation, and may ultimately stand between you and that new job. So brighten up! Feel good about the fact that you're taking control of the situation, and don't let the fear of change hold you back.

Next comes the all-important self-assessment. Make a list of what makes you happy and unhappy, your strengths and weaknesses. Set some goals. You need to have a vision in order to set your wheels in motion.

"OK, great," you may be saying to yourself. "I've done all of that 'feel-good' stuff, and I've set my goals. Yadda, yadda, yadda. But this isn't a good time to be looking for a job! There are no jobs out there! What can I really do to help myself?!"

Relax -- Gibbons has some very practical tips:

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

In this environment, it's more important than ever to take a creative approach to the job hunt; figure out how you can put your skills to work in another way. Nationwide, people are moving from residential construction into green construction. Former real estate brokers are running businesses managing foreclosures. Wall Street refugees are putting their experience to work in the financial arms of health care, government and alternative energy jobs.

FIND YOUR TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

Everyone, yes everyone, has skills that will transfer to jobs in other fields. If you're a stay-at-home mom and have done fundraising for your child's PTA, that's project management! You need to write down your responsibilities and accomplishments, and look at the skills you used to get those things done.

For example, say you're an auto mechanic. You probably know how to adjust ignition timing, rebuild carburetors and grind pistons. That sounds fairly specialized, doesn't it? But take a step back and look at the bigger picture: You can identify mechanical problems, adjust/maintain/repair a variety of mechanical devices, and you probably have experience using a wide range of tools. When you think about it like that, you realize that you **DO** have transferable skills. Suddenly, it seems likely that you could land a job repairing home appliances; you're not limited to being a mechanic in the auto industry.

MARKET YOUR SKILLS CORRECTLY

Don't assume that the person reading your resume will take the time or even be able to see how your skills fit their criteria. This is especially critical when switching careers.

For example, a job seeker wants to move from the mortgage industry into sports marketing. He believes that marketing mortgages is just like marketing sports: same skills, different industry.

But take a look at the most recent entry on his resume:

Sears Mortgage Company

Vice President, Segment Director, Shelter Business

- Director of \$4.6 billion residential mortgage business for the largest mortgage lender
- Organized and established regional marketing division; a business that included first and second mortgages and mortgage life insurance

When you read that, it screams "mortgage expert"! If you're hiring for a sports marketing job, you take one look at that resume and assume the applicant knows nothing about your business.

Now take a look at his revised resume:

Sears Mortgage Company

VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DIRECTOR

- Director of a \$4.6 billion business
- Consolidated four regional business entities into one; doubled product offerings
- Grew market share 150 basis points; solidified #1 market position

He highlighted his job title, not the company itself. He took out all additional mentions of the word "mortgage," along with jargon related to that field. Instead, he highlighted what he actually did for the company, with an emphasis on accomplishments and results, complete with lots of keywords, numbers, and dollar signs. Hey, what sports marketing company wouldn't want to hire someone who could "solidify a No. 1 market position" or "double product offerings"? Again, it's all about learning to market your skills correctly.

REMEMBER, IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU!

There's lots of competition for jobs out there; you need to get noticed! Show a prospective employer ways you're either going to save them money or make them money. In the end, they don't care about your hopes, dreams, or personal fulfillment; they want to see how you can help them!

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

In this challenging economic environment, networking is more important than ever. I consulted with several career counselors, and each told me that 65 - 80 percent of jobs are obtained through networking. Only 15-20 percent of job openings are even publicly advertised, and only about five percent of job-seekers end up getting jobs through ads or job postings. So, get out there! Tap traditional networks like alumnae associations, trade associations, etc, and don't neglect electronic networking. For instance, LinkedIn.com is a professional networking site that now has 30 million members. You can search a company by name and see who in your network is connected to people working there, and wrangle yourself an introduction. All from the comfort of your living room!