

How to Find a Job in 6 Weeks

2nd Edition

Anthony Ranieri

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my two children, Anthea and Christian for the joy they have given me and for making me so proud of them.

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INTRODUCTION

Earlier in my career I had the undistinguished task of laying off 250 workers due to an imminent plant closure. If you speak to any person in the human resources profession they will tell you how mentally difficult it is to let people go and see their disappointment in the process.

Redundant employees express a wide range of emotion, ranging from family responsibility and financial insecurity to just losing a work life they had grown to rely on and become accustomed to. It was my job to counsel employees about how they could better cope with their personal circumstances and I hired professional workplace counsellors to assist.

What was to happen two weeks later was unprecedented. After a job well done and a smooth redundancy process my managing director walked onto my office, thanked me for my efforts and made me redundant! 'I needed you to complete the process first before I could let you go,' he said. I felt as though I had hit a brick wall and was momentarily stunned. How was I to break the news to my wife? I had two young children; a mortgage like most of the working population and my wife did not work outside the home. This book is about how I coped with this stressful moment in my life.

I had to draw upon all my previous job-hunting experience and survival skills to get through. I can break it down into 5 key critical success factors:

1. Successful job search skills knowledge
2. Strong financial management initiatives
3. Flexible and open career re-assessment

4. Mental toughness and a strong belief system
5. Managing your current job.

Successful Job Search Skills Knowledge

Key Success Factor Number 1

Your very first objective when you have lost your job is to get another job. Now that may sound a bit straightforward but it isn't. To get another job today requires special knowledge and skill.

This is because in most situations, redundancy falls during times of economic slowdown, rising unemployment resulting in fewer jobs and greater competition. Labour economists call this an 'oversupply of labour' and this will cause an imbalance in the labour market favouring employers. That's right – employers can pick and chose whomever they like and they know it. I think that competition is a key word here, because just like any other competitive scenario, nobody remembers who came second.

The only winner is the person who gets that job and you're up against it in what is cruel market place. If you have been working in an organisation for a long time and are reaching the older age category, being out of work for the first time can shock you. All of a sudden you're in a cauldron of job hunters operating in an unbalanced labour market where supply far outweighs demand.

Let's face it, it will not be easy but there is always hope. Whatever you do don't become defeatist and lose faith in your abilities. Get yourself in job search mode and learn all you can about job-hunting skills. It will be necessary for you to do this in order to compete at the same level and edge closer to winning that job.

Your job search knowledge must consist of the following areas of competence:

1. Ability to tap into the hidden job market
2. Successful behavioural interview skills
3. Good letter writing ability with a marketable resume
4. Strong belief in yourself and mental stamina.

Successful job search skills knowledge is critical and this book focuses heavily on this key area. I have covered all of the above areas of competence in separate chapters so that you can easily move from one key activity to another. Your ability to network with others and perform well at interviews will be paramount.

Your ability to write good covering letters and have a well-written up-to-date resume is equally important. If you need more coaching

beyond the scope of the book then go out and get it.

Strong Financial Management Initiatives

Key Success Factor Number 2

Money management is certainly an area of great stress during redundancy. This is because your comfort zone has been taken away from you. The weekly or fortnightly pay you have relied upon is no longer there and you are concerned about where your next pay is coming from. I have seen this scenario cause great stress to people with debts, mortgages, and young families particularly where there is only a single income earner.

I remember once a young man who was made redundant and as Employee Relations Manager, I had to be the bearer of the bad news. He broke down and cried in front of me, not because he had lost his job, but because he had just bought a new house and had increased his mortgage. To make matters worse, his wife was expecting a second child and she was not working. He was frightened to tell his wife and did not want to go home. I eventually spoke to his wife and decided to drive him home myself. The anxiety and pain he felt during this moment was tremendous.

I have always felt a correlation with money management and the ability to focus on getting a job. If you can take the pressure of monetary matters away from you for a short time then your ability to focus on job hunting improves significantly. The distraction of money worries does not help you focus on interview performance and getting that job. You may become desperate and make the wrong career move in the name of security. You must focus on managing your money immediately after a job loss and here are 10 financial tips to get you started:

1. Speak to your bank about lowering your mortgage repayments immediately. You will find that over the years you have probably increased your repayments either deliberately or through interest rate reductions. Pay the minimum amount possible for now and forget about paying your house off sooner. That is not a priority now and you must review your financial objectives.
2. With your redundancy payment pay-off credit card debt either in part or full and decrease the number of bills and interest you must pay monthly.
3. Eliminate all unnecessary spending. All those nice things to have such as pay television, domestic servants,

- magazine subscriptions and memberships should be reviewed.
4. If you have money tied up in investments such as shares or fixed interest term deposits, withdraw this money either in part or full and create a buffer zone for emergencies. Hold this money in an everyday 'at call' account for psychological security. This buffer zone will make you feel more secure and comfortable and allow you to focus on job hunting.
 5. Watch your spending and don't behave as though you are still employed. This is the toughest part because it involves changing your lifestyle and habits. Holidays, clothes and any other regular purchases such as household items and entertainment expenses must be slashed. Believe me, they are not important now and you will survive until things are back on track again.
 6. Be economical with controllable household utilities expenses such as gas, electricity, telephone and your food budget. I managed to save \$150 a month on food for my family by just watching for price specials, comparing prices and being more selective.
 7. Create a strict budget that is achievable and try to work within it. It will help you stick to targets and operate within set budget guidelines.
 8. Apply for social security payments. The money will not be enough to live on but it will stretch your savings further buying you more time for job search.
 9. If your finances become too tight prepare to refinance your home as the last resort. Again, this is not a preferred option but the key to job success is time.
 10. Talk about the prospects of borrowing money from family only if necessary. You will need a very supportive family for this and be prepared to pay them back when you get a job.

All the above tips are really common sense applications and I utilised them when I was unemployed. It helped me extract more time for my job search and relieved the pressure to focus on getting the right job.

I must stress that the key to financial management during redundancy is different and geared towards buying time to enhance your job search. I say this because you cannot pick and choose the timing of your next job offer. It could happen quickly or take longer

than expected due to a range of factors including a bit of bad luck. You must be mentally prepared for this and factor it in to your financial management.

Flexible and Open Career Re-assessment

Key Success Factor Number 3

My advice in this instance is get out of your comfort zone whatever you do! Too many people I have helped in their career transition have hindered their job search prospects by sticking to old beliefs and methods of approach. It has to do with familiarity and what people know best, a type of comfort zone holding you prisoner within an electric fence. Once you have lost your job your life will change from despair to opportunity.

I say this because it's a perfect opportunity to try something new and different. That's right, you have nothing to lose now and you can experiment and try new ideas and concepts. Stretch yourself and become excited with the thought that everything you have always dreamed of doing outside your steady and regular job has now arrived. It is time to try and test new ideas, experiment with new concepts or see where your hobbies will take you. I commenced writing this book to keep me busy when I lost my job.

Key success factor 3 is about open career re-assessment. To sit down and analyse your career options carefully rather than focusing on getting back to your regular day job or profession that you have been working for so many years.

It is time for a break and a re-assessment of your career wants and needs. In this book I dedicate a chapter to career options. I recommended that you consider a variety of options such as:

- Starting your own business or franchise
- Developing a new concept, idea or invention
- Consider going back to school and undertaking further studies
- Develop your hobbies into a potential income source
- Try a new career in a totally different industry and/or profession
- Take a sabbatical and enjoy the beautiful pleasures of the world.

Whatever you decide to do, flexibility in thought and total career re-assessment will enable you to increase your options in life. When

you are in career transition mode I can easily teach you job search skills and how to apply them, however, your view on life and how you exercise your career options is a thought process that only you can act upon. Life is all about increasing your options and then picking the best one for yourself.

Don't limit yourself when you lose your job, open yourself to all possibilities and explore your opportunities to their fullest. Would you believe I was motivated to write this book when I was between jobs? I had always wanted to write a book about assisting others achieve better employment prospects but I always thought it too hard and time consuming.

The truth was that I had never written anything this substantial before and just the thought of commencing it made me feel uncomfortable. I had some spare time up my sleeve and I decided to give it a try, each day I wrote two or three pages and my intensity and confidence grew each time. I also enjoyed it immensely and thought about writing as a new career. I reassessed my career options and was willing to try and experience other things, so can you!

Mental Toughness and a Strong Belief System

Key Success Factor Number 4

Losing your job is one of the toughest events that can happen to you in life. All of a sudden your standard of living, prosperity and your perception of yourself is challenged. Not easy thoughts to deal with on a daily basis.

If you have a family with young children and a mortgage like the majority of us, then matters can get worse because others dear to you and reliant upon your steady employment are also affected. There is nothing like coming home to your partner and informing them you no longer have a suitable job and watching their jaw drop all the way to the ground in a split second.

I learned very quickly that being sorry for myself was not going to help me and what had happened in my previous job was over and done with. I could not change the past but I could ensure that the present and future be better managed with a new way of thinking. The best way to get another job is to stay focused and challenged, to be mentally tough. If you cannot do this for yourself then do it for your loved ones who rely on you. Many authors describe this situation of downward spiralling anxiety and depression as 'learned helplessness'. You believe that no matter what you do, nothing can

help you out of your current situation, and that you are destined for doom and failure.

This is not true, learned helplessness will not get you another job, but mental toughness and a strong belief in yourself and your abilities will. All situations are temporary and you are just entering a trough in your life cycle. Soon it will get better and you will enter a resurgent growth stage and rise towards a new peak in your life.

However, you must believe in your abilities strongly because your belief system will control your thoughts and actions. A belief is nothing more than a feeling of certainty about what something means to you. In this book we discuss belief systems in more detail and expose how you can better control your beliefs towards positive thinking. These are beliefs that can help provide you with energy and a form of mental toughness to keep you going in a positive direction.

Managing Your Current Job

Key Success Factor Number 5

I have made it very clear in my book that good jobs are hard to find today and that the oversupply of good candidates ensures that employers have the upper hand at recruitment. This is what we are dealing with in the new millennium and sometimes we may lose sight of this and feel that the grass is greener on the other side.

Working as a professional employee relations practitioner for many years, I have seen many people leave good jobs simply because they were not good at managing or keeping their current employment. I don't mean that you should give up better opportunities, far from it. I am referring to those who have left their employment in difficult circumstances or were not entirely happy with their workplace circumstances at the time. It is easier for us to lose our composure rather than think a situation through rationally during difficult circumstances.

The grass is not always greener on the other side. All businesses have their political issues, difficult people to get along with and peculiarities that don't always make sense, and perhaps, some companies are more prone to this than other. The key is to better manage your career and your job whereas you can rationally think through those difficult moments and ensure you continue to maintain positive relationships in the workplace. All things pass in life and sometimes it may be nothing more than a difficult phase the company is going through. If you are being counselled for poor performance, have a hard look at yourself and determine whether

there is genuinely room for improvement.

You may find that you can turn it around with a dedicated personal approach and commitment. If someone is making your life miserable focus on better managing others in the workplace and see if you can change the situation by adopting new and different strategies to better manage this person. There are many courses, books and mentors in the workplace that can assist you overcome difficult situations through their own experiences.

In this book I talk about considering other career options. I would like to reinforce a key point that the best time to do this is when you are employed. Develop other career paths and opportunities so that if your current job no longer provides you with the motivation and passion required, then you will be better prepared. It is really about your application to managing your job better that can make a difference in these circumstances.

I will review all the five critical success factors throughout this book; however, keeping in mind that job search skills knowledge is probably the most important of the five critical success factors. I had some advantage compared to others in the area of job search due to my human resources background. A lot of people would say to me, 'How do you manage to find jobs so quickly under the circumstances and end up with a good salary package?'

Having worked in human resources for many years and having recruited many employees for a number of organisations over this period has given me an insider's view of how the job-hunting process works. However, it is not just the system you apply to job hunting we are concerned about but your attitude to job-hunting that is very important.

I believe that I could teach you the most advanced job-hunting techniques available and interview skills necessary for successful job-hunting, however, if your belief system or application of these skills is not competent, then your chances of securing the right job in a short time frame will be diminished.

You will discover throughout my book that job-hunting success is directly related to the amount of time, energy and effort you put into it. It can be a very time-consuming, demanding and frustrating process.

It is my opinion that your ability to secure a better job, given all other socio-economic circumstances, should not take you more than approximately six weeks ideally. The longer the job-hunting process continues beyond this point the more difficult it may become and there are government statistics to show this later on in the book.

It also becomes difficult from a financial management point of

view. Unless you are a member of the wealthy few, most of us eventually run out of money and the standard of living you become accustomed to may change dramatically.

Of course, achieving a job offer within a defined time frame will vary amongst professions, age group and educational background and is very dependent upon your individual circumstances and supply and demand in the market place. However, in the majority of cases it is an achievable goal.

Job-hunting is predominantly about believing in yourself and your abilities. It is about portraying self-confidence and self-appraisal, constantly refining and developing yourself to a higher personal level.

Would you believe me if I told you that the majority of job candidates are assessed based on their fit to the organisation? Even though technical skills and experience are important, the overriding factor to job-hunting success is going to come down to your ability to interact with others. Your personality, values and perceived work ethics and how these important factors present themselves at the interview are a key measure for success. We are talking about a match between you and the employer that is predominantly based on whether you will fit the team and organisational culture.

I once had a frank discussion with a friend who was looking for a job for over nine months and could not secure a position. I asked him why someone with his experience was taking so long to get a good job. His response was that all the jobs he had applied for and attended interviews were for some reason or another, not suitable.

After further discussion it became apparent that his job-hunting philosophy was based on upon his own views and interpretations of what companies should be looking for in a candidate.

He was trying to dictate the recruitment process himself and this discouraged the employer. He also was not flexible in his approach. We discuss flexibility in salary packaging later on in this book. I suppose the body language and subtle message he was conveying to employers at interviews was that he was doing them a favour by just being present and that the job had to be on his terms.

If there is one bit of advice I can give you right now it is that employers don't necessarily care what you think at interviews because they already know what they want. Employers have spent years and lots of money developing profiles of people that they believe fit their culture. If you don't appear to fit at the interview then all the experience in the world will not get you the job.

The recruitment process in most cases is still heavily weighted in favour of employers and they can really dictate the terms as to how a

candidate will be selected. Today, employers are also very careful in selecting candidates because of the cost involved in maintaining and training employees.

This is mainly due to increasing industrial laws and other regulations that can severely punish an organisation financially for any breaches. We are talking about unfair dismissal, equal opportunity and discrimination, health and safety and the involvement of trade unions, government departments, or other associations that monitor compliance of these laws.

A closer look at the employment market is always appropriate. We should all be aware of the labour market in which we are active. The point I am making is that job hunting is getting harder, particularly for better-paid and more sought after jobs in good companies. I hope to provide you with enough information in this book to give you that extra edge, knowledge and advice by revealing the hidden secrets to job-hunting success based on my own experiences and successes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Ranieri is Melbourne based with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources. He has worked in a variety of permanent and contract management positions in the human resources area and has a thorough knowledge of recruitment, training and development, employee relations, change management and human resource management. Anthony developed his fascination for corporate cultures when he became a professional contractor and was required to “dip into” the job market every six to twelve months. He has seen a number of organisational cultures at work and reminiscent of the best parts of his experience in this book.

Working in the human resource area helped Anthony to look at the world of work from a different perspective, so he understands corporate politics and the things people will do to get there, even in the satirical sense.

His first book, *How to Find a Job in 6 Weeks* was published in 2003 by Tandem Press in Australia and New Zealand. He has recently published a second book, *Corporate Psycho – A Expose and Mocumentary on the Adventures of Max Clarke*.