

**"21<sup>st</sup> Century Career Guide" - Minneapolis Star Tribune, June 22, 2009**  
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In these difficult economic times, what are the best practices that job seekers should adhere to? Here are my Top 10 rules for finding your next job and managing your career.

**1. Question authority.** Don't rely too much on the conventional career wisdom of the past 25 years. The rules of thumb of 1983 to 2007 are no longer relevant, just as that era's fast-moving career realities were different from the single-employer stability offered to middle managers and union workers by monolithic corporations of the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

**2. Self pity is your enemy.** These are stressful times, with an uphill economic outlook for years to come. But feeling sorry for oneself is a recipe for failure. Your previous success was a result of ability and effort, attributes that have even more value in a downturn.

**3. No job is irreplaceable.** Don't allow your self-worth to be held hostage to your current job, or to that "perfect" opportunity you are interviewing for. You have an objective value to the marketplace -- any one opportunity reflects that value, but doesn't establish it. As Anthony Robbins has said, "if you are down to one answer, it is time to reframe the question."

**4. Focus.** Take a sharpshooting rather than shotgun approach to your career strategy. It may seem prudent to pursue a variety of jobs in as many industries as possible to increase your chances. But casting too wide a net dilutes your value proposition and your energy. Better to focus on the two or three roles at the intersection of your strengths and market opportunities.

**5. Don't waste time online.** Avoid the temptation of relying on websites like Monster, Career Builder and Craigslist as your primary job-seeking activity. You are less likely to distinguish yourself from the crowd by reviewing ads and sending your resume to be filtered by an automated application. Instead, one-on-one relationship building with decision makers and influential players in your industry is the best use of time.

**6. Act purposefully.** As UCLA coaching legend John Wooden preached, don't confuse activity with accomplishment. Targeted effort in pursuit of a viable goal will take you farther than continuous plodding. Forty hours a week is not twice as effective as 20 if your efforts are unfocused, or your energy lagging.

**7. Embrace change.** What goes up must come down. The second half of the 20th century was the most prosperous era in the history of the United States. The current instability of our economic system is the direct result of companies and individuals gambling with personal, corporate and societal resources to keep the party going, rather than accept a naturally occurring, relatively mild economic downturn.

**8. Career kaizen.** Kaizen is the Japanese term for continuous, incremental improvement. World-class global companies seek to raise their value proposition in small tactical ways, knowing these may ultimately add up to strategic advantage. The substantive increases in productivity and profitability of the past quarter century came from companies and individuals applying a philosophy of continuous improvement to their output, and not resting on their laurels.

**9. Improve people and analytical skills.** The marketability of specific skills in the modern economy shifts with dizzying speed, affected by business needs, off-shoring and automation. The safest goals in personal development should be on improving your interpersonal and analytical skills.

**10. Put on blinders.** Don't allow gloomy economic news to distress you. Once you have created your job search plan, execute it for at least that week without the distractions of your limping 401(k) portfolio or other factors currently beyond your control. Instead, put your energy into a reality-based sense of optimism and resiliency, to motivate yourself and present a positive impression.