



## 8 Signs Your Job Search Strategy Needs Help

By ALISON GREEN

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If you're having trouble finding a job, it might simply be the reality of a tough job market—but it might signify that the problem is in how [you're approaching employers](#). Here are eight signs that it might be time to take a fresh look at how you're approaching your job search.



- 1. You're not getting any interviews.** If you're not getting a single interview, that suggests that either your resume and cover letter need some serious help, or you're applying for positions you're not suited for. In this tight job market, your resume needs to show that you have a track record of success in the skills the job requires, and your cover letter needs to demonstrate that you're well-spoken, enthusiastic, and sane. And you can't target jobs too far outside your skill set; with so many people seeking work, employers have the luxury of not taking risks on untested candidates.
- 2. You're getting plenty of first interviews but no second interviews.** If you're getting interviews, your applications materials are getting you in the door. But if you're not getting call-backs, your interview skills might be working against you. Try better [preparing for interviews](#) beforehand, and consider asking a trusted contact for some feedback about how you're coming across. The best experience in the world won't make up for a bad impression in an interview.
- 3. When you ask past colleagues for networking help, they all come up with reasons why they can't help.** If people who know your work aren't comfortable vouching for you, you might have a reputation problem. Were past co-workers disappointed with your work ethic, competence, integrity, or general pleasantness on the job? That can come back to haunt you when you're counting on them for introductions or recommendations later on.
- 4. You're not sure what jobs you'd even be suited for.** If you don't know what you're qualified to do, you can't expect an employer to figure it out for you. [Employers respond](#) to clear, compelling cases for why a candidate would excel at a position, so you need to figure out a way to make that case for yourself.
- 5. You've been unemployed for more than six months.** Job searches are taking longer these days, and searches of six months or more aren't uncommon. However, if you've been looking for longer than six months without at least some serious interest from employers, it's worth revisiting your resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills. Often this kind of re-boot can get the phone ringing again.
- 6. You're only searching for jobs on the Internet.** While plenty of people get hired by responding to online job postings, it doesn't change the fact that you'll be up against an enormous amount of competition. Having someone in your network connect you to a job opening can be the boost that sets you apart from the rest of the pack, so it's crucial to activate your [network](#) on your behalf.
- 7. You're convinced the hiring process is unfair.** Hiring isn't fair. Jobs don't always go to the most-qualified candidate; sometimes they go to the person with the inside connection, or the person who was easier to get along with in the interview, or the person who showed more willingness to learn. But if you get hung up on the idea that you're somehow being wronged, your bitterness will show in interviews and will send employers running.
- 8. You're feeling desperate.** When job seekers are feeling desperate, they often make bad decisions—from trying [gimmicks](#) like sending gifts to their interviewer to being overly aggressive in calling employers. If you're feeling desperate, try to stay calm and don't start doing things that you know deep down are cheesy, inappropriate, or overly aggressive.

*Alison Green writes the popular [Ask a Manager](#) blog, where she dispenses advice on career, job search, and management issues. She's also the co-author of *Managing to Change the World: The Nonprofit Manager's Guide to Getting Results*, and former chief of staff of a successful nonprofit organization, where she oversaw day-to-day staff management, hiring, firing, and employee development.*

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