

(Plan Your Career) Too many options: Focus on the familiar to improve job prospects

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“I can do that,” T repeats to himself every time he reads an ad for a job opening. And he is right. Job seekers with a wide range of skills and a deep experience base are blessed with a strong sense of what is possible. They learn quickly and readily apply old knowledge to new tasks. And no one wants to hire them.

The problem is simple: supply and demand. When job seekers outnumber open positions, hiring companies want – and get – the perfect worker every time. Often that person is someone who requires no training, has previous industry experience and is willing to work for a very fair wage.

The solution is simple, too. Focus. Getting a foot in the door is easier if the door you’re going through is familiar to you. Look for opportunities which closely align with your most recent or strongest experience.

Maybe you hated your years in sales and want to transition into marketing. As a hiring manager, why would I hire you to do marketing? So I could pay someone to train you, let you make mistakes at my expense and possibly cost me a lot of money I don’t have right now? You are able to do marketing. You learned a thing or two from the marketing department at your last company; you never really did marketing, but you’re sure you could pick it up quickly. Okay, I believe you. But I’ve already laid off anyone who could train you, and the next guy in line has ten years of marketing experience with our top competitor. Guess who gets the job?

When the possibilities seem endless, focus on desired results. Focus on positions similar to those you’ve had before. Focus on companies who compete against those you’ve worked for. Focus on networking with people who know you and your talents. Get in through the sales door, and then give 100 percent to that position. When business picks up in the future (presumably soon, because you’re an awesome salesperson), look for ways to ease over to marketing. You don’t have to give up your dreams; you just have to strategize to reach them.

Please send career planning questions to Julie@insightnews.com