**HOW JOB HUNTING IS LIKE DATING**

Managing your career is a lot like dating and marriage. This is coming from a guy who has been married for over 30 years. Everyone assures me that I’m not missing anything— I really do not want to date again.

Frequently, we date the same way we look for a job. We put our best foot forward and pray they won’t reject us. If that’s all you’re doing, if you aren’t also deciding whether you really want to be stuck with them, you can wind up with some lousy partners — and jobs.

Every date does not turn into marriage. It’s only after lots of dates, when you are sure that the two of you are compatible, that a good marriage can happen. The same thing happens when you go in for an interview.

Another similarity is that waxing bitter about your previous relationships will not produce good results. If you complain about your current managers, just like if you gripe about your exes, you’re likely to get scratched off the list.

Thirty years ago I was working for IBM as a computer programmer. The project I worked on was fraught with problems. So I submitted an application for a position with a major computer software company. I got the interview, but after about 20 minutes I knew they would not hire me. I was extremely negative and I never heard from them again.

If you are angry or miserable, you absolutely need to get past that. Focus on what you want and where you want to go. Think of the light at the end of the tunnel.

Can you picture where you want to go? What does it look like? Let’s start by describing the boss you’d love to have.

I have many clients who want and very much need someone who is collegial, almost a peer. I have other clients who very much want someone who is in control. But I most commonly see the desire to have a boss who is politically astute and gives my client complete control to do what needs to get done.

My favorite boss was Theresa, who managed the IBM AIX Briefing Center in Austin. She was phenomenally good at hiring superstars and then leaving them alone to do their jobs. If anything went wrong or there was political conflict, she was right there to back us up. She was not competent, though, to make technical decisions, so she left those to her team. Best manager I have ever had.

I have often talked to young engineers who assumed their bosses were better engineers than they were and teachers who assumed the principals must have been fantastic in the classroom. Neither of those is true. The skill set needed for your job may not mirror the skills a manager needs.

Who has been your best boss? What made that boss so good?

You need to craft the equivalent of an elevator pitch to say, “This is what I am looking for.” You need to clearly and succinctly express what you want.

What size organization suits you best? What kind of environment is the best soil for you to work in? What kind of culture and organizational structure do you want? Create an elevator speech that defines all of that:

I am looking for a smaller organization in the xxx industry, where I get to lead a cohesive team developing yyy. I want a manager who will support me but allow me to run the show as I see fit. I want to work in an organization that values teamwork with minimal politics ...

How long will this pitch take to develop and perfect? Probably longer than you think.

You will need to practice it on friends, significant others and anyone else who will provide constructive criticism.

Once you have crafted your “Here is what I want” pitch, get out and talk to people. When you can state clearly and succinctly what you want, friends and colleagues will come to your aid. This is a real key to future happiness: Know what you want, and know how to ask for it.

**DATING IS TRYING PEOPLE OUT**

I had a client who took a retirement package from a tech company and decided he wanted to try something completely new. He wanted to be a butcher. I don’t remember why. I think it had something to do with desiring hands-on work, becoming an artisan, liking meat, remembering the role of butchers in his neighborhood. At any rate, he had the smarts to “date” butchery as a career choice.

He took a couple of animal husbandry classes and then he got a seasonal job in the meat department at a boutique grocery. From that experience, he learned that he did not like being on his feet all day on concrete floors.

He “dated” the job he was interested in instead of moving in right away.

Remember, any job you take is a commitment, even if you don’t stay in it very long. It’s a lot of work to get hired, get in the system, let go of other searches and then recover if it doesn’t work out. Take your time at the front rather than having to clean up a lot of mess on the other end.

***ACTION STEPS:***

* Start thinking about job seeking in terms of dating. You won’t just take whoever will have you; you’re looking for a good fit, too.
* Craft a pitch succinctly stating exactly what you want: “I want an executive position with a lot of autonomy in a small, but thriving, HR firm.”
* Share your pitch with everyone you meet.

For additional resources, check out:

Repurpose Your Career Resource Center <https://careerpivot.com/RYC-Resources/>