



Time for a CHANGE

Back to work blues? Bored of your daily 9-5 grind? Learn how you can find the job of your dreams – then make it a reality...

New years always herald new beginnings and, after the excesses and indulgences of the festive season, it's no wonder that many of us kick-start the year promising to improve at least one aspect of our lives. Whether it's to travel more, get in shape, learn a new language or begin saving, these resolutions often help us plan where we'd like to see ourselves in 12 months' time. But as we enter February, the sad truth is that many of us have already settled back into the daily grind

and the prospect of a whole new lifestyle can start to seem like a pipe dream.

However, now is the perfect time to give your day to day life a shake-up. And given we spend a third of our lives at work, it's only natural that improving our career situation is frequently at the top of the change agenda. According to recruitment website Bayt.com's recent Top Industries Survey 2012, the most

common reasons for changing careers are better salaries, development opportunities, and lack of recognition.

So you've made the decision to move, but what's the best way to begin searching for a new job? According to the professionals, setting yourself on a new career path isn't as daunting a prospect as many of us believe. JT O'Donnell, CEO of Careerealism Media,

specialises in helping people find career satisfaction. She says: "It's impossible not to reflect on your life at this time and say, 'What do I want this year? How will I make that happen?' But looking for a new job is a proactive process. If you want to find work you are happy with, it's up to you to figure out what that looks like, and what companies have that type of work."

Recruitment website Bayt.com's chief marketing officer, Lama Ataya, believes organisation is key. She suggests approaching the job search methodically, logically and systematically, using the same discipline and organisational skills you would apply to a real job. "Set aside a number of hours per day and develop a routine for your job search. Keep a record of every interaction you have with every company and make sure you follow up diligently and ask for leads at every juncture," she adds.

It's also important to remember the old adage 'It's not what you know, it's who you know,' when it comes to job hunting. Network with friends, family and ex-colleagues – anyone who can refer you to the hiring managers of the companies you want to work for.

Building relationships is key when looking for new work, especially given that, as Julie Bishop, founder of Jobhop, reveals, 65% of jobs are filled via recommendations. "Employers reward employees for referrals. It's cost effective for them to do so, plus playing by the rule 'like attracts like' they get to employ candidates similar to the employees they already have."

Also, keep an eye on any developments or expansion plans the company has in mind. "Expansion means jobs and, by targeting specific companies you want to work for, you will be the first to know and can act immediately," adds Bishop.

Create a niche for yourself by focusing on the skills and experience that only you have and that make you stand out from others. Once you know exactly what your specialty is and what benefits you can bring to a company, then use the right 'keywords' to attract recruiters.

In an ever-developing digital world, it's also important to ensure your online profile reflects the person you think future employers are looking for. O'Donnell explains: "Social media and specifically LinkedIn, the professional networking site, are brilliant tools to help you identify and connect with

people at the companies you wish to work for. This data can be accessed 24/7 and used to help you build your relationships with employers faster. It is a powerful tool that you should use daily to get the most out of it." And it's not only LinkedIn where you will find recruiters. Twitter, Facebook and even YouTube have been used by companies and agencies to find the right employee, so be mindful every time you post something new.

So if your online profile is up to date and accurate, is it time to ditch the CV? Eventually, says Bishop, who shows

statistics and numbers."

Your CV and cover letter are the first interaction that you will have with an employer so make sure it counts, says Ataya. "Use your CV to leave a positive and high-impact first impression. Make sure the format, content and flow is professional and appropriate.

"A successful CV will be well-researched and honed down to contain many of the exact skills and attributes an employer has used in their job description."

The message from the recruiters is clear

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companies how to use the Internet to tap into top talent. "If you're asked to send a CV then make sure it is relevant to that job position only. Do not scatter gun the same generic CV to everyone," she advises.

O'Donnell adds: "The most important thing to do with your CV is to keep it current and factual. Remove any subjective language where you brag about yourself and stick to accomplishments you can prove with

– if you want a new job, you have to really prepare for your job search. It takes more than an updated CV and LinkedIn profile.

Be clear about who you are and what value you bring to employers. Think of yourself as a business of one, which must sell itself strategically. With the right preparation, job searching can be far less stressful and far more rewarding so get organised, be confident and, lastly, good luck! ●

MAKE THE RIGHT IMPRESSION WITH YOUR CV

Grab their attention

Ensure your CV includes a summary that really sells your skills and experience.

Be relevant

Use keywords from the job advert itself to show why you are a potential candidate for the role.

Stand out from the crowd

Include skills, hobbies and qualifications that set you apart and make you memorable.

Tell the truth

It's not worth lying or exaggerating on a CV. Always back up whatever you say about yourself with facts and be prepared for everything you say to be checked out.

Add links

If you have a LinkedIn profile, or an active professional Twitter account, add the URL to your CV.

GET PREPARED AND BE SURE TO SHINE AT YOUR INTERVIEW

Research, research, research

Devour every piece of information about the employer and the role. Preparation is key.

Practice makes perfect

Role-play an interview scenario with a friend and ask them for constructive feedback on your answers and demeanor.

Look the part

Dress for the role you are interviewing for and feel confident in what you are wearing. When you look good, you feel good.

Preparation is key

Plan your route beforehand and aim to get to the interview at least 15 minutes early to relax and take in the atmosphere.

Ask them a question

Be prepared with several questions to ask the interviewer, both about the role and about the company itself.