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Job Hunting On The Sly

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Summary:

So you want to look around for your next career step but you are concerned that your current employer will find out and give you an early exit? Confidentiality in your job search is a reasonable concern and makes the way you approach finding your next position all the more important. Confidentiality and privacy issues in today�s hyper-informative world are issues that should be taken seriously.

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Article Body:

So you want to look around for your next career step but you are concerned that your current employer will find out and give you an early exit? Confidentiality in your job search is a reasonable concern and makes the way you approach finding your next position all the more important. Confidentiality and privacy issues in today�s hyper-informative world are issues that should be taken seriously.

Keeping your intentions of changing jobs a secret is a challenge but secrecy is in your best interest. Case in point: Hilda was a highly paid pharmacist working for an independent pharmacy in Atlanta. She was approached by a new independent pharmacy who was a direct competitor of her current employer. The word leaked out that she was considering taking a directly competing position and her employer terminated her employment out of concern for operational security. As pharmacist-in-charge, she had full access to retail/wholesale pricing, future plans, insurance reimbursement rates and customer information � all data that would be highly desirable by the competitor. Hilda�s employer just could not take the chance that she would leave and take all that information with her so they terminated her. Unfortunately, the competitor did not make an offer of employment to Hilda and she was left out in the cold � not hired, and fired. If she had taken greater pains to keep her options confidential, she may not have ended up in the predicament of suddenly being unemployed.

On the flip side, it may be tempting to let slip to your current employer that you are looking around for new opportunities to provide some leverage for a raise or a promotion. Fishing for a counter-offer is a no-win situation. In a survey by the Wall Street Journal, 93 percent of employees who accept counter-offers to remain with an employer leave anyway after 18 months. If you are unhappy enough to spend months hunting for a new position, dealing with recruiters, and going on interviews, the true value of a counter offer should be questioned. Employers make counter-offers for their best interest � not the employees�. Employers need to make sure projects are completed, that deadlines are met, and that production does not lag. An employee who accepts a counter-offer has branded himself as disloyal and possibly a gold-digger and will forever more be viewed as such by superiors.

Common sense rules when going about a confidential job search. Do not use your work phone, email, or company cell phone to conduct any job search activities. Do not surf the job sites during your lunch hour or at anytime on your work PC. Be careful of the conversations you have within earshot of other co-workers. Do not leave your resume lying on your desk at work. Keep your plans and intentions quiet, even from close office friends whom you feel you can trust. Request confidentiality from all potential employers until an offer is made.

Beyond the obvious, consider the following tips for keeping your job search hush-hush:

Remove identifying information from your online resume. Replace your name with a generic title such as �Senior Marketing Executive�. Use only your cell phone number and a web-based email address that can be dropped after your job search. City and state is sufficient for address � no need for street address or zip code. Remove your current employer�s name and replace it with something that is descriptive, yet unidentifiable such as �Major Manhattan-based Financial Organization�.

Be careful in your networking. Networking is essential to an effective job search, but indiscrete networking can breach your wish for confidentiality. Networking carefully can be even more difficult in closed industries or highly-specialized fields. Ask more questions than you answer in group settings; talk about possible employment options with decision-makers only; and provide your resume only to someone in a position to assist you confidentially.

Protect your references. References should only be provided in an interview, and preferably not at a first interview. You don�t want your colleagues getting wind of your intentions before an offer is imminent.

Consider a confidential job search agent. If you have an annual salary of greater than $500,000 and/or you are well-known in your industry, hiring an agent to conduct your job search might be a good idea. The agent can extend inquiries without breaching confidentiality. An agent is not a recruiter, but rather someone who works for you individually to act as your liaison with potential employers.

In addition to confidentiality in a job search, everyone should be concerned about protection of privacy. Never, ever give out your social security number, driver�s license number, or bank account numbers to anyone during the job search process. There are scam artists out there who will take advantage of your vulnerability as a job seeker to steal your identity, your money, and your reputation. Privacy Rights Clearinghouse has some helpful tips for protecting your privacy during your job search at http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs25-JobSeekerPriv.htm.

The World Privacy Forum has an excellent article about an Internet job scam that is a must-read for anyone considering using the Internet for their job search. This particular job scam involved 23 Internet job boards including Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and PreferredJobs.com. The scam involved a posting that required the new hire to transfer money into their personal bank account and then transfer it back out to an account overseas via Western Union, keeping a percentage of the total amount for their work. According to victims of the scam who responded to the article, the interview and application process for the position was extremely convincing and they were totally taken in. The article can be found at http://www.worldprivacyforum.org/jobscamreportpt1.html.

The bottom line is that confidentiality starts with you. A secret shared is no longer a secret and cannot be controlled. If you are serious about keeping your career ladder climb quiet, you must take the precautions that are necessary. Employers have a great deal to lose when they lose employees � human capital investment, corporate information, competitive data � so keeping your intentions to leave might well be in your best interests until the time is right.