What’s career obsolescence? Why does no one seem to care about it?

In the end your career is defined by your resume primarily, and your interview skills secondarily. The resume is what gets you a call back and the interview skills are what get you a job.

Career obsolescence is when you box yourself into a corner and can no longer be hired for any but a few handful of jobs. What contributes to career obsolescence:

* A terrible resume
* Interviewing badly
* Working for shitty companies
* Not updating your skills
* Not getting recognition in your current job
* Not making tangible and describable accomplishments in your current job
* Not highlighting your important accomplishments in your last job
* Having a job that’s low value / low on the value chain
* Being easily replaceable
* Isolation. Not leaving yourself open and aware of new opportunities that arise
* Failure to network.

I got interviews at 5 places. KPMG it came down to two people and the other person got it. The insurance company invited me back but I had to decline because I had gotten an offer from Microsoft. The film place I was the frontrunner but HR pushed back. The consulting company didn’t know what to do with me but offered to hire me. Microsoft made the offer and I took it.

Resume

Your resume is your career life. Update it often and question any point in your career when your resume becomes stagnant. Highlight specific accomplishments, goals, skills updates, winning companies and roles. Your resume is your foothold into new jobs and if it doesn’t read like an ascending arc you won’t get that first call. Your resume is more important than your current job so always be mindful of how it reads.

Interviewing

Know your strengths and accomplishments inside out. Be able to map them to common interview questions. Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses and when asked about weaknesses be prepared to acknowledge them and show how they helped you grown. Have a manageable list of accomplishments with metrics and be ready to apply them to interview questions. When you get thrown a curveball in an interview try to map one of your specific scenarios to one of the successes you have prepared. Be prepared for standard interview questions:

* An instance where you made a mistake and how you handled it and learned from it
* An instance where you handled a very difficult situation
* An instance where you delivered outstanding results as part of a team
* An instance where you overcame a difficult team member or relationship
* How you handled a request where you disagreed with your manager
* How you overcame an obstacle that seemed insurmountable
* An instance where you had to adapt to a difficult change
* An instance where you won over a skeptic
* An instance where you delivered excellence with limited funds or timelines

Again, speak to scenarios, and have measurable to back it up.

Skills

Don’t be satisfied with the status quo or your safe pay cheque. Remake yourself every year. You did a great job last year? Consider that the minimum bar for the year that follows. Every year find a way to raise the bar and never be satisfied with “good enough,” always push yourself to define “better.” A year without major accomplishments and new approaches is a year of stagnation and increased career risk.

Job Security

Every year find a way to climb the value chain. More and more of IT will be outsourced so always make sure you’re contributing to business value and you’re focusing on the long term. Technical skills will continue to wane, anything that can be outsourced or offshored will continue to wane. Find a job that can’t be readily outsourced and direct your energies into it. Sales can’t be outsourced. Relationships can’t be outsourced. Hands-on work can’t be outsourced. Don’t participate in the race to the bottom. When your job can be done as easily as someone from India but for lower wages you’ve painted yourself into a corner. Never let yourself become easily replaceable.

Always be intentional about your career. Don’t let yourself coast, it’s far too dangerous a pattern to slip into. Keep the resume updated, maintain your professional network, capture and be prepared to speak about your successes, always be looking for the next opportunity.

Recommendations

Never burn any bridges. It may seem like a disposable relationship but it’s never what it seems. It doesn’t matter what you think today you never know when you’ll be looking for work and every positive relationship is a possible bridge into your next role.

Never use a departure to tell people what you “really think”. Those same people may be a hiring manager at your next job or a recommendation you can’t afford to lose. Leave with grace, try to get every endorsement you can, and don’t shut out anyone who could later be an “in” for a job you want.