

Q&A Column

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Email Subject Line: When the Self-Employed Go Job Hunting.

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Headline : Moving From Self-Employment Back to Employment

Summary:

I am a self-employed business generalist. I have extensive experience in management throughout the entertainment field. I am looking for employment after 15 years of owning my own business. Any suggestions as to why I am not getting responses from the marketplace I am targeting?

M.J., Hamilton, Ontario

Landing Page copy

Headline : Moving From Self-Employment Back to Employment

Dear Mark,

Question: I am a self-employed business generalist. I have extensive experience in management throughout the entertainment field. As well, I have loads of experience in the service industry managing restaurants, hotels, research departments, national computer distribution houses, and cellular service centres. I am looking for employment after 15 years of owning my own business. Any suggestions as to why I am not getting responses from the marketplace I am targeting? (eg. Rogers, Open Text, Corus Entertainment).

M.J., Hamilton, Ontario

Dear M.J.,

Employers are a picky bunch these days, the more so because in many fields there are lots of strong candidates for every available job. This means you have to really stand out to break through the clutter.

If you're relying mainly on your resume, your history of self-employment *could* be perceived as an impediment, especially to narrow-minded employers. That's because folks who are hiring tend to be suspicious of those who have left the employee fold before. In essence, the question in the back of their minds is "what's to stop you from learning all about my business then bolt to go back out on your own again?"

The good news is there are ways to turn your entrepreneurial experience to your advantage. On the resume front, I'd suggest you try using a "functional" format, rather than the standard "reverse chronological" version. This way you can highlight your skills and accomplishments rather than your specific work experience. While some employers will disregard this type of resume because they believe it's a smokescreen to obscure a choppy work history, others welcome the directness of this approach.

When you get to the interview stage your self-employment can also give you an edge. Focus on how it's taught you to: be resourceful; generate results with limited budgets; be comfortable wearing many hats; and how to be self-propelled.

You may be asked the dreaded question: "So why do you want to get a *real* job now?" or something that implies you're desperate. Don't let it rattle you. You might legitimately say that while you are proud to have made it on your own, what you're looking for at this stage is the ability to apply your talents to a business considerably larger than your own. You can also mention how you thrive on the camaraderie of a busy workplace, the sharing of ideas, and an opportunity to engage in teamwork.

Leave out the fact you might feel lonely on your own or are craving even the teensiest bit of security. Remember that you are basically marketing what you've gained in the last 15 years to yet another client: only this one is offering a salary and possibly some benefits for good measure.



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