

Q&A Column
Author: Mark Swartz

Email Subject Line: Looking For Work While Working

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Headline: Conducting a Stealth Job Search

Summary:

I have a pretty good job but I know I can do better. I'm worried, however, that if I start looking around for something new someone at my company might find out. That could put my employment in jeopardy. So how do people search for work while they're already working?

Lex R., Leamington, Ontario

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Dear Mark,

I have a pretty good job but I know I can do better. I'm worried, however, that if I start looking around for something new someone at my company might find out. That could put my employment in jeopardy. So how do people search for work while they're already working?

Lex R., Leamington, Ontario

Dear Lex,

You're right to be concerned about your privacy when doing a job search while employed. I've heard of cases where a boss calls a subordinate into a meeting and waves the subordinate's resume - which the boss has downloaded from an online job bank - in the subordinate's face. Not exactly a stress-free experience.

Yet this doesn't mean you can't make a full-blown effort to find new employment even if you're already working. It's just that you'll need to exercise a little caution.

For instance, consider uploading your resume only to online job banks that allow you to hide your identity, or that let you block out your current employer from finding you. Otherwise you may not want to post your resume online at all at this point.

When working with recruiters, make sure you tell them not to contact specific companies and organizations if you suspect that word might get back somehow to your current place of work.

If you have an interview with a new employer, try your best to schedule it either before the regular hours when you have to show up at your current job, or else after your usual workday has ended. Hint: do NOT dress fancy in the middle of the day when everyone at your job can see you, unless it's your typical attire. Otherwise someone is sure to blurt out "Hey, looking smart today. Got a job interview scheduled?" (I base this advice on personal experience when I was in the corporate world and daggers were being drawn at every opportunity!) Instead, bring a change of outfits and head to a McDonalds or other innocuous outlet where you can change clothes in the washroom and walk out without being noticed.

Something else to keep in mind? A growing number of employers are tracking your internet use while on the job. If you visit job banks, or send e-mails that are job search related at work, you run the risk of being called aside to account for your actions. At worst it could be deemed a firing offense. Even if you only search online during breaks or lunch, you are still using the employer's tools. Keep in mind the risk of being caught doing so.

Lex, do not hesitate to seek something that is better for you. Only keep your eyes wide open about how you conduct your search. By ensuring your confidentiality, you boost your odds of retaining your existing job. After that...you deserve it. But it's up to you to secure it.