

Looking for a new job?

Looking for a New Job...Discreetly

Most people change jobs more than they change mates. But no matter how many times you do it, looking for a new position can be tricky. Looking for a job when you already have one is kind of like looking for a new girlfriend before you break up with your current love. You know you want to end the relationship, but you don't want to reveal your plans.

What behavior is reasonable and what crosses the line? Some things are clearly wrong, like using a company phone, computer, postage meter or office supplies. Surfing your own firm's Web site or intranet for internal jobs is probably okay. Many companies encourage that because current employees know the company culture.

Your Online Self

In this age of technology, it can be tough to hide your job search. For example, when you post your resume on CareerBuilder, Monster, Dice, The Ladders, ExecuNet and others, should you make your contact information visible or keep your profile confidential?

Several managers have had to deal with an employee whose resume, which was posted on a job site, caught the attention of the company's human resources department. Reactions vary. Some companies call to find out why the individual is job hunting and ask them to remove it. Other companies have taken more severe action. In any case the employee is likely to be perceived to lack any loyalty to the company. Ironic considering how quickly many companies release employees when earnings don't meet shareholder expectations.

So if you want to remain anonymous, be careful about what and where you post. Don't do anything that's a dead giveaway to where you work, like mentioning your experience with specific projects or customers. Information like that makes it easy for human resources staff to identify you.

The real issue isn't whether you post your name; it's whether the recruiter can quickly locate you via email or cell phone. Have inquiries forwarded to a non-company e-mail address; remember to check that address daily. Returning calls at lunch or in the early evening is fine, since many recruiters do work late in order to speak with candidates outside of work hours. At the same time, don't expect a recruiter to hang around the office waiting for your call until you get home from work and have dinner.

Rules of Engagement

The line between what's okay and what's not also shifts depending upon your type of employment. Contract employees are often paid by the hour, so they can job hunt during the day as long as they're not charging for that time. There's a big difference between what you do on billable hours and non-billable hours. No matter what, it's critical to know what the corporate policy states.

Every Firm is Different

Company culture also helps define the line between the right way and the wrong way to find your next position. Keep your secrets to yourself. Don't tell your co-workers because if you tell them, they're going to tell someone else.

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How to Sneak Around

If you're at all good at job hunting, you're eventually going to have to sneak out to do interviews. Schedule them before work or on the weekend when possible. Be careful how you dress. If the office is casual, a suit is going to be noticed. Keep your interview clothes in the car or in your off-site gym locker, and change on the way to the interview. Another alternative is to schedule all your interviews for a single day, then use a personal or vacation day to take that time off.

You May Not Go

Finally, as you tip-toe around, remember you may end up keeping the job you have. We always caution people not to damage the bond of trust they have with their current manager. At your next job, you may be learning new skills that will enable you to manage the company you just left.

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