

GET THE JOB

When a Search Needs to be Secret

Oftentimes, those searching for a new position do so under the cover of secrecy. Potential candidates may worry about job security, should their boss find out. Or perhaps this is simply an employee fact-finding mission, meant more to see what their value is on the open market rather than to actually leave a present place of employment.



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Whatever the backstory, there is a delicate balance to be struck when letting others know you're interested in discussing a new job while keeping your employer out of the loop. Here are a few handy tips.

SMART NETWORKING

If your hope is to spread a wide net, be aware that you may end up alerting the company where you work – or someone in the boss' immediate professional circle – of your interest in other jobs.

Industry peers tend to share information about job openings and candidates, and they might inadvertently reveal your search. Increased activity on job sites like LinkedIn may also be a red flag.

At the same time, however, labor statistics show that the vast majority of jobs are found through personal contacts like these.

To walk what is admittedly a very fine line, start by only discussing your candidacy with people you trust the

most – or those well outside your local industry contacts.

After all, inopportune gossip or surprise revelations could end your search before it even begins. Build your network outward through these trusted sources, and they'll quietly help you along the pathway of opportunity until you're ready to discuss things with folks at the office.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Blending your current job

duties with a job search is one of the biggest mistakes you can make as a professional.

It's also one of the easiest ways for your search to be unnecessarily revealed.

Don't use company email for queries or give prospective employers your work telephone number. Avoid your professional messaging system, too. Companies employ information technology experts who can scan for these details through basic searches of your work corre-

spondence, internet activity and call history. Looking for other employment on company time is also unethical, and can lead to big problems in the office — up to and including termination.

MAKE IT CONFIDENTIAL

If you'd like to keep your search under wraps, let potential employers know by marking everything as confidential. Include this verbiage in email subject lines, mention it in your cover letter, and consider placing a watermark on your résumé for an added sense of security. Take time to stress the need for discretion during the interview process as well, adding that you appreciate their cooperation as the search moves forward. At some point, all will inevitably be revealed, but you can usually help control the timeline.

STAY ENGAGED AT YOUR CURRENT JOB

Updating your résumé or composing a cover letter while still at work can be a huge distraction. You might be mentally planning your exit, but it's important to remain steady and engaged in your current position while this search unfolds. You might not receive a hoped-for job offer, a hiring freeze might be instituted or the process may drag out. That could put your paycheck at risk.