

[Optimize your job hunt for today's economy](#)

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As a career coach and blogger, I am constantly seeking inspiration and looking for messages to convert into job search advice for my readers. So, when I watched a commercial for Lexus, one sound byte really resonated with me:

You can't change traffic, so change the way you drive through it!

How true – there is so much that individuals do not control. The economy. The weather. The neighbors' barking dogs. I bet someone once told you, "You can't change other people, but you can change how you react to them."

How much happier would we be if we stopped trying to change the things that we cannot alter and instead focused on what we do control – our responses?

The job market is a case in point. What if job seekers stopped "oh woe is me-ing" and instead focused on what they DO control – the way they navigate their searches. The playing field has changed, and it is important to adjust to the new terrain.

Here are some tips to help you take the wheel:

Draw Your Own Career Map

Identify your goals. You can't get anywhere until you decide the destination! What characteristics and traits make you special? What are you (or do you hope to be) known for in your field?

Review trends and industries with career potential and determine if there are matches between your skills and interests and those fields. Instead of cursing a business with a shrinking job market, re-adjust, re-tool and re-train to take advantage of new possibilities.

Once you know your direction, optimize your resume. Be sure that it is skill and accomplishment focused, not a list of "stuff" you've done. (If you've been blaming your age or experience level (too much/not enough) for your lack of interviews, take a good look at your resume. It may be holding you back.)

Is this "new" advice that only applies to today's economy? No. However, it is so much more important now than ever. If you do not know where you are going, you are EVEN LESS likely to get there!

Design Your Vehicle – Brand YOU!

Once you identify a destination – drive there! Learn how to position yourself as the expert in your field. Use all of the tools at your disposal to create a "vehicle" (your brand – it doesn't have to be a Lexus. Or a bus!) that will drive you where you want to go.

If you haven't looked for a job in a while and/or aren't tuned in to managing your "[digital footprint](#)," it's time for a quick lesson in social media. Presenting yourself well both online and in person will help open

previously closed doors. [Optimize Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), blogs and other social networking tools to make connections and share information.

In fact, Twitter's new "[Lists](#) (which you can read more about [HERE](#)) are an absolutely amazing way to mobilize a terrific network in your industry or niche. Essentially, those who use this feature (which is not available to everyone, yet) will select a group of people they identify as leaders in their fields (or, at least the most interesting people to follow in a topic). You will be able to visit someone's Twitter page and easily access not just whom they follow, but whom they endorse.

Job seekers who take the opportunity to get inside someone's head (via Twitter lists) will be able to narrow down the "movers and the shakers" in their fields of interest. This is really an incredible opportunity. The only downside is the amount of work it takes to get these lists filled in! I have not had a chance to create all of my lists, yet, and it is possible some will "opt out" of creating lists. (For example, Chris Brogan, a social media guru and author of *Trust Agents*, [has some reservations about leaving people out](#) and does not plan to create lists of individuals.) For anyone who jumps in, though, it is a gold mine of opportunity for job seekers. Take advantage of it!

Take the Keys!

The key to a successful career is to network generously. There is nothing more important or more useful for your job search, and the current economic climate makes this even more crucial. Your success depends on your ability to broaden your professional circles and to reach out to a diverse socio-economic group of people. Do not allow your network to be the people you happen to know. Be purposeful. Identify organizations and see how your network can lead you to people who work there. Conduct [informational interviews](#) and demonstrate why they can't do without you!

Professionals who habitually facilitate introductions earn goodwill and reputations as valuable resources and colleagues. Become that professional; it will help you overcome obstacles to career success.

Start the Ignition – Communicate Your Value

Your ability to promote, communicate and connect your value to colleagues and superiors is crucial. Hone this "soft" skill – practice your writing, emailing, speaking, interviewing and presenting skills. Join Toastmasters. Make a point to learn how to communicate well. When you can articulate why your role is vital, you will help secure your future.

Confidently Forge Ahead – Start Rolling

Adjust your rear-view mirror, but keep your eyes on the road! Move forward with your plans knowing that you DO control your career. Is it as easy as reading these steps? No, but if you follow this plan, you will be on your way to managing your job hunt and/or your career with finesse and aplomb!

Seize control of what you can! Don't be a victim of circumstances. Drive your own career bus!