



WELCOME TO CAREER BOOT CAMP!

Years ago some mean person, knowing my own compulsive superstitious pattern, told me that you should always have your affairs in order by the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve because the amount of clutter at that very moment would be reflected in the amount of unrest I would experience in the next year. Now that's just mean spirited to tell someone like me a thing like that! For years now it's meant that there were no wild parties for me on New Year's Eve. Instead, I'd be home organizing my closet and throwing out the partially green things in the fridge so I wouldn't have a messy start to the new year. Lest you think I'm a total bore, there was always a sparkling beverage at the crack of the new year to celebrate. And, like many of you, New Year's Day is always a day of reflection with promises to make certain changes in the year ahead – often related to getting to the gym more often and curbing some of the less desirable but deeply ingrained habits I have developed over the years. More than a few of the folks I know (and I'm guessing a good number of you reading this column!) also made “getting a new job” part of the plan for the year ahead.

You might be wondering why I'm writing about “resolutions” on the second week of the new year, instead of last week. And, it's because you and I both know that the resolutions you keep are the ones that start with a real, serious plan and have step by step tasks that you follow to make them a reality. Just like a resolution to “lose 10 pounds this year” is destined to fail without more detailed plans and follow through, a resolution to “get a new job this year” isn't going to cut it.

While I can't promise to help you get buff by swimsuit season with this Boot Camp, I can tell you that if you follow the steps I'm going to outline in this and the columns to follow, you will have a new career opportunity by Summer.

First things first – listen up. Finding a new job takes work! The likelihood of someone calling you up with the perfect job when you're not looking for one, is about the same as you being able to lose your flabby belly while munching Pepperidge Farm cookies out of your desk drawer mindlessly while you work late into the night without going to the gym. It could happen, but I wouldn't buy the next smaller size swimsuit and hope that it'll “somehow” fit by Memorial Day. Likewise, too many candidates say they'd move for “a compelling opportunity” but have no specifics about what that would look like when I ask them the follow up questions.

You have to know what you want to do next before you begin your search. Otherwise, it's like the guy who loses his watch and is out looking for it at midnight under the streetlamp in front of his office. His pal says to him, “Is this where you last saw your watch?” He replies, “No, but this is where the light is and it's dark where I remember last seeing it.”

Training Week One in Career Boot Camp – Block out 2 hours this weekend to work on your career plan. I know, your life is already an over-scheduled mess and your boss is a jerk and you never have any time – but that thinking will keep you in the very same job you’re in, unless the career fairy brings you a new job while you’re sleeping. Get a piece of paper and write down **every** thing you do in your current job that you like doing (or in a former job or a hobby you enjoy). And on a separate piece of paper do the same thing for every thing you do in your current job that you really dislike and want to not do or have in your next job. This is the basics that you MUST know before you write a resume, before you start searching for a job. If you can’t identify in clear tangible terms what you love and want to do more of – you’re not likely to get it in your next role either. Same thing, while you might have some general ideas of what drives you nuts in your current role, having a clear list of what it is allows you to measure opportunities.

Employers who make successful hires have a checklist of what they want in a candidate and you have to “check the boxes” to get in front of them. Those who don’t know what they’re looking for make haphazard hires (perhaps you’re the victim of one of those poor recruiting practices!) The same thing happens with candidates – those who know exactly what they’re looking for are much more likely to find their next opportunity quickly and find happiness in their next role. It allows you to evaluate opportunities in the same way they’re evaluating you. Ask yourself “Does this bring me what I’m looking for?” Or are you being seduced by the name brand appeal of a firm or the money – that’s fine if it’s the answer you get, but don’t take a job without understanding exactly what you’re doing and why.

Tune in next week for Training Week Two of Career Boot Camp – making your resume sing your praises. Meanwhile, keep an eye on our website for opportunities we’re working on and, if you haven’t yet, get a call scheduled with Sarah James, our Candidate Relations Associate – her schedule is on our website (www.pinnaclegroup.com). Let’s work together to make 2007 the year this resolution gets realized for you!

Kindly,
Denise