

Looking for a New Job? Consider These 10 Things

Today's job market is more competitive than ever, and with limited job openings, job seekers can't afford to make mistakes. According to the Texas Workforce Commission, 6.5 percent, or 183,500 people, were without jobs in Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown in March. The Career Services advisors at American InterContinental University (AIU) are pros at spotting common mistakes that can prevent even the most qualified individuals from landing that dream job.

"Despite the high unemployment rate and struggling economy, job opportunities still exist in Houston," says Steve Malutich, president of AIU Houston. "The key to securing a job in this economy is differentiating yourself from the competition. Job hunting is about making an impression and getting noticed by employers, and in these economic times, being just average probably won't get you very far."

What common job-hunting gaffes should new graduates avoid? How can seasoned professionals stand out against all their peers? From AIU career specialists, here is a list of the top 10 things to consider when searching for a job:

- 1. Make sure your resume points you in the right direction:** Customize your resume and cover letter for each position – it's one of the most important things you can do to stand out. Keep your resume to one page unless you have many years of experience. Use the cover letter to elaborate on your experiences.
- 2. Plan your next career move:** Try not to jump into a different job because you dislike your boss or commute. If you don't consider how your next career move fits into your overall career path, you may soon be in the same boat again. If forced to get a new job, take a step back and be strategic. Your instinct might be to mass-apply, but it's unlikely you'll land more interviews.
- 3. Don't underestimate the cover letter:** It can give a great first impression and offers the chance to provide additional details on your work experience.
- 4. Attend interviews, even if you don't think it's your "dream job":** You might learn that you're more interested in the position than you first thought – and it never hurts to practice.
- 5. Follow up courteously:** Show your interest in the company and express your desire for an opportunity to interview. But don't become a pest!
- 6. Stay knowledgeable in your field:** Keeping up with industry news and trends will give you something to talk about in a job interview and show your dedication and interest.
- 7. Your networks can be your lifeline:** Mention to anyone and everyone possible that you are looking for a job. They may be able to offer advice and job prospects.
- 8. Don't be too exclusive:** When searching online, review all jobs in your area. Don't filter by key words as you may eliminate jobs that actually are interesting, and it gives you an opportunity to learn about companies and contact them for other possible opportunities.
- 9. Be realistic:** Especially in this economy, be realistic about your expectations for salary, promotional opportunities and so on.
- 10. First impressions are everything:** Always be professional – from dressing the part to speaking to reception when you call a company.