

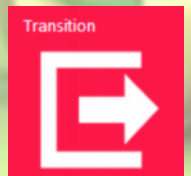
Welcome to our March 2015 e-bulletin.



ImaginativeHR

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Six reasons why your job search has stalled

Zena Everett (@ZenaEverett1): ImaginativeHR Senior Career Coach

The CBI predicts that 50% of UK businesses intend to hire this year, also reporting that firms could struggle to fill these vacancies because of skills shortages. My head-hunting contacts are under pressure to meet this demand for talent. Add to that the strength of the FTSE 100 and now should be a great time to be job searching, whether you are in a role and open to approaches or actively on the market. So, if recruiters aren't making contact with you, here's some possible explanations:

1. You are good at what you do, but not visibly good.

You are great at your job, turning out results year after year and a model employee. You hope that someone is going to discover you and promote you, or find you a new role with a more appreciative boss. It rarely happens. Obviously you have to be good at what you do to progress (although I am sure you have seen examples where people do well regardless) but you also have to be SEEN to be good. Shrinking violets are easy to overlook and don't demonstrate the necessary emotional intelligence needed to move up the corporate ladder. Understand what your personal brand is - your unique blend of expertise - and articulate it, albeit with charm and humility. Be clear on what you have achieved and what you want to do next, both in your own organisation and externally. Put yourself up for promotions and opportunities. Make sure the recruiters in your sector know you. Become the 'talent' that businesses want to recruit and retain.

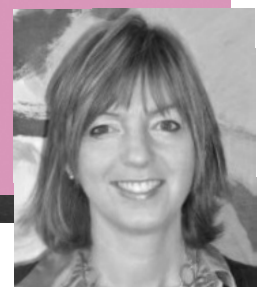
2. You haven't used LinkedIn properly.

If you want to get on the head-hunters' radar then LinkedIn is ubiquitous. It's not acceptable to be just 'on' it - with a lame page (maybe done by your marketing department) with little specific information - or to put your whole CV up there. Like any form of networking, you have to use it to build relationships and engage. If you go on LinkedIn just to get recruited then it is too late and too obvious. Use it before you need to, genuinely keeping in touch with your network and sharing information intelligently to reinforce your brand. Most profile views come from your current colleagues, so use it for internal as well as external networking. Put thought into giving recommendations and personalise your invitations. Thank people for their connections too. Optimise your profile correctly so a researcher looking for your specific skills and expertise will find you easily. Don't rely on LinkedIn for your job search, but don't underestimate it either.

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Individual
Career Transition / Outplacement



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3. You say you will take a step back.

Right now you're actively on the job market and not feeling too confident. You are applying for roles that are more junior than your current one. For example, you've been a Regional Sales Manager and now you are applying for a Territory role without people management responsibilities. It is very hard to go backwards. If you have other commitments/passions that you want to focus on now, then explain that. Otherwise the recruiter will assume that once you have your mojo back you'll be off again, leaving them with an angry client. They are paid to find candidates who are on their way up in their career; organisations have plenty of their own staff who are plateauing, they don't pay fees for more. Create a career narrative that demonstrates why they should recruit you and why their role meets your objectives at this stage of your career.

4. Your CV isn't evidence based.

Recruiters look first at the most recent job on your CV: the company and job title. If they are interested, they read on to find evidence of success. This needs to be measured through KPIs achieved, percentage improvements, how the business was when you left compared to when you started, etc. They want tangible evidence that you are the best at what you do. Generally the best indicator of future success is what you have done in the past, in a relevant context. Recruiters want to see facts.

Sadly CVs are still full of subjective character traits, particularly in the personal statement section. When you last hired someone yourself did you brief HR by saying 'let's find a successful, ambitious individual who works well individually or as a team member?' You didn't. You had a more specific need, starting with the immediate issues you wanted the new person to focus their attention on when they join.

Your personal statement should summarise what you have done in the past, what you want to do next and the competencies that bridge the two. The rest of the document is supporting evidence for this.

5. Your network is weak.

Judging by most of my outplacement clients' experiences, most roles still come from your own network, particularly at senior level. Actually, your network's network - so one step removed from you. The more you have nurtured your network on the way up, the more people are happy to do you favours and make introductions for you. Opportunities tend to be created because people know you are good, you clearly articulate what you do well and because you are the right culture fit - people trust you and share your values. Within 'network' I count previous colleagues and managers, direct and indirect reports, customers, suppliers (lawyers, auditors), mentors, anyone who has a vested interest in getting you back to work, as well as all the external relationships you have accumulated over the years.

6. You just aren't doing enough.

People who find work more quickly than others put more effort into the early stages of their search. They create opportunities for themselves, through networking, talking to recruiters, applying for roles, making direct approaches, working on their LinkedIn profile, using job boards judiciously, attending events and being generally active in their market so they know what's going on. They continuously refine their marketing message and get it out there. They aren't wasting time on job alerts.

They treat this as a 'mystery shopper' opportunity, talking to several organisations to find the best fit and learning best practice on the way. They realise that they need to have several irons in the fire in order to land the right job, probably more than they first think. They also welcome rejection as they understand that statistically these bring them closer to an offer (although they sometimes need extra support with this bit). Contemporary recruitment processes are long drawn out, internal candidates can sneak on the short-list and briefs change. Successful job seekers need to stay resilient and focused.

This attitude is in itself appealing to hiring organisations as it reflects their general approach to business.

Zena Everett (@ZenaEverett1): ImaginativeHR Senior Career Coach



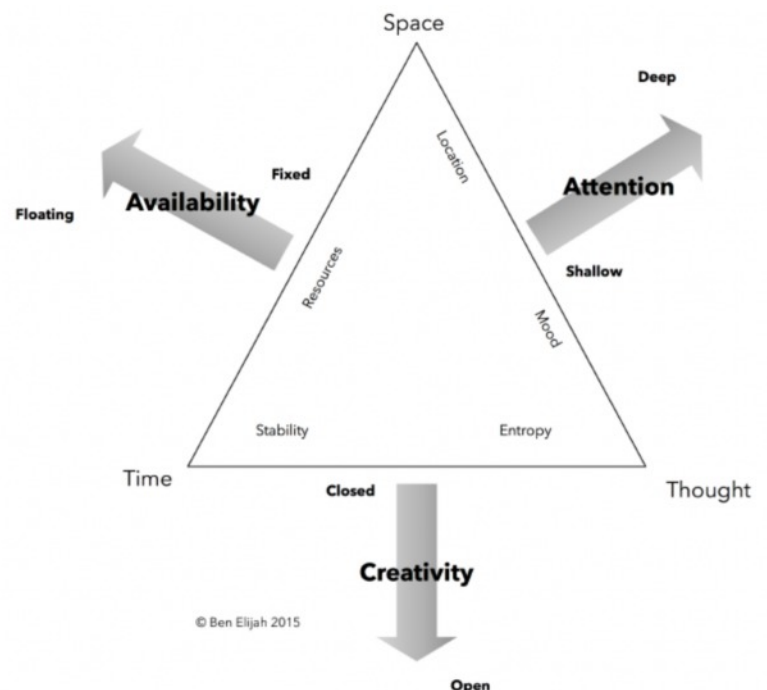
Situational Awareness and the Office

How do different working environments affect the kind of thinking which takes place in them? I think this is an incredibly important question. I want to give you a model which you can use to relate a particular situation to the tasks best suited for it. If you can apply this in your organisation, you'll make it easy for your staff to choose the right environment for the different tasks they face.

The Context Triangle

In my book, *The Productivity Habits*, I tried to address the problem of how different situations enable and constrain us. This is important because a lot of friction occurs when people stress over tasks that they can't deal with. Ever felt nervous about an important phone call when you're on a plane? What good does that do?

A context is a particular combination of Space, Time, and Thought. The Context Triangle is a model I use in the book to describe how these factors relate to one another. As you can see, a number of different properties link the three factors. The most interesting of the three is "thought". Notice how it is defined by Entropy and Mood.



Entropy

Entropy means the amount of information floating around in your environment. Have you ever noticed how you come up with great ideas when chatting with friends? Perhaps a moment of inspiration has occurred to you when walking through a forest or a busy street? These high-entropy environments can stimulate an open form of creativity where the mind finds it easy to synthesise new ideas.

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Low-entropy environments like offices and briefing rooms are a little less stimulating. They suit a more closed form of creativity. They're great for focused decision-making. Writing up notes into a report, fine-tuning a strategy, or evaluating candidates after their interviews. The focus of a quiet office is ideal.

Mood

Mood is a little more subjective. I wanted to keep the term relatively vague in my book because it means different things to different people. To some, it might relate to energy levels; to others, emotion or focus. Or some combination of all of these. In any case, mood heavily influences the kind of attention someone can bring to a task. Deep attention for periods of intense concentration and engagement, or shallow attention for "brain dead" work which can be ticked-off quickly.

Utilising different situations

How can you take advantage of this?

Look back at the triangle. Every task requires certain levels of attention, creativity and availability. If you know this about a task, you can feed this information back into The Context Triangle. This will help you to find an appropriate working situation.

What kind of tasks does your business have to deal with every day? If you need lots of creativity, a drab office probably isn't ideal. Try booking a table at your nearest café instead. The quality of work your people can produce in a relaxed, stimulating environment might surprise you.

Similarly, perhaps your people need to hone their notes into an amazing presentation? Give them a space like a quiet meeting room. A bland environment will make it easier for them to focus on critical and structural decisions, without being disrupted by interruptions or new ideas.

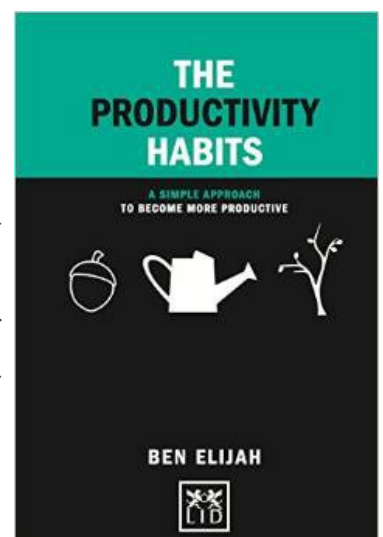
Finally, consider mood. Perhaps it's best to process low-attention admin work near the end of the day, when energy levels are low. Or perform a basic activity, like tidying up. This can give you a sense of progress when some difficult interaction lowers your mood.



Final thoughts

When describing a situation, non-tangible factors like entropy, mood, and energy levels are as important as the availability of physical resources. The Context Triangle links the properties of a situation to the needs of a task, and vice versa. It gives you a language for applying situational awareness to the way you work. I hope it empowers your people to make the most of their environments.

Ben Elijah - Author of *'The Productivity Habits'* (Also see: <http://www.inkandben.com/blog/> and follow on @inkandben)



Participate in our ImaginativeHR / iPEC London Coaching Excellence Survey 2015

ImaginativeHR is partnering iPEC London; independently ranked as the world's No.1. ICF accredited coach training programme, to survey business international leaders, HR, L&D and Talent professionals during Q1/Q2 2015, to identify current coaching trends within their organisations.

We will be delighted if you take the time to participate in our survey:



Click Here

Individual survey responses will of course be treated in complete confidence.







Participation in this survey will mean that you will automatically receive a copy of our **coaching best-practice white paper** and related media clips. Randomly selected survey participants will also be eligible to receive copies of a range of excellent business coaching books; including *author-autographed* books.

The ImaginativeHR team.

ImaginativeHR is a bar raising UK and international employment life-cycle / talent development consultancy which partners HR to creatively align organisational, team & individual interests.

Our team has worked internationally across over 30 countries and comprises 125+ UK and internationally-based occupational psychologists, assessors, trainers, coaches, facilitators and consultants.

Email us at info@imaginativehr.com or call us at ++44 (0)845 548 4321 to speak to ImaginativeHR about how we can support your UK and international needs:

 <p>Identify Identify your talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment centres• Psychometric assessment• 360 assessment	 <p>Assimilate Assimilate your talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Onboarding• First 100 days coaching• New team performance	 <p>Develop Develop your talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual coaching• Team coaching• Mentoring
 <p>Engage Engage your talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff focus groups• Staff surveys• Career clinics	 <p>Transition Transition your talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career reviews• Redeployment• Outplacement	 <p>Enable / Deploy HR Enable / Deploy HR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• HR coaching & mentoring• HR permanent recruitment• HR interim recruitment