STAYING MOTIVATED DURING AN EXTENDED JOB SEARCH
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At best, seeking a new job can be an unnerving proposition because of the way it puts a professional’s skills, experience and reputation on the line. When the process lags on and on, however, it can begin to erode the confidence of even the most self-assured attorney.

Staying motivated when a search takes longer than expected can be particularly challenging. The techniques job-seeking attorneys used when their search began may no longer be effective or appropriate several months into the process. It’s critical to continually reassess strategy and take steps to keep up morale. Following are suggestions for reenergizing a protracted search for employment:

• **Continuing education.** While the job hunt is no doubt a top priority, using some of their time to gain new skills can be a wise distraction for lawyers – and a valuable investment. Courses that will increase marketability, such as those focused on computer or technical skills, can help. They expand knowledge base and improve long-term career prospects. Even if the course is unrelated to the legal field, attorneys can still benefit. Learning should be an ongoing process for any legal professional, whether or not they are actively in the job market.

• **Keeping a journal.** Spending about 10 or 15 minutes a day writing down one’s thoughts about the job search process can also be beneficial. Questions to ask might include:
  - What progress did I make?
  - What setbacks did I encounter?
  - What new avenues can I pursue?

  Often the simplest ideas can be the catalysts for new approaches to a search.

• **Seeking advice.** A career counselor or professional recruiter can assess an attorney’s resume and cover letter and offer an overview of the employment market in their area. Recruiters can recommend steps to take for a better targeted search. They also can help identify unadvertised job leads.

• **Re-evaluating priorities.** Failing to accomplish one’s job-search objectives can be discouraging. So it’s worth taking a second look at primary goals. Sometimes attorneys find they have inadvertently been setting themselves up for failure. For instance, if they feel they have limited their prospects to companies in a certain
geographic area, they may need to expand their searches. Even with today's gas prices, would driving an extra 30 minutes each way be worth it for the right opportunity? Would a position with a lower base salary that is closer to home, yet with the room for advancement be better overall? Lawyers should decide on their absolute must-haves and be prepared to compromise on those aspects of the job that are like-to-haves, particularly in a tightening job market.

- **Giving it a rest.** When job seekers feel they've run into another dead end, or they just don’t have the energy to send out another resume, it's probably time to take a break and do something completely unrelated to job hunting. Even just designating a day free from talking or thinking about employment issues can recharge a job search.

- **Getting exercise.** Studies have shown that physical activity can minimize the psychological impact of stress. Getting into a regular exercise routine will help maintain energy. This is important because hiring managers look for enthusiasm when interviewing job applicants. But it's not always easy to maintain that enthusiasm several weeks or months into the search. Exercise can help.

- **Joining an association.** Participating in activities offered by legal professional associations can help attorneys increase their visibility in the legal community, especially if they play an active role in these groups and volunteer for projects. The reward is new contacts plus the satisfaction of having provided much-needed assistance to a volunteer-driven organization.

- **Joining a support group.** Almost everyone has encountered a setback in the course of his or her career. Talking with others who are going through the same experience is important not only to feel connected but also to develop new ideas that can help a job search. Most major cities have career resource centers that host networking meetings for job seekers. It's often surprising how willing people are to assist, whether they offer leads on firms that are hiring or simply listen.

Finding a new position requires persistence, and, at times, an ability to overcome rejection. To endure a long search, attorneys must believe that there are jobs out there with their names on them. By diligently following leads, tapping professional networks and using all available resources, they can be sure they're still on the right track.