

Recovery: Life After Being Skunked

I live near a park and creek. Therefore, wildlife often co-inhabits my downtown, urban neighborhood. One day this past summer (which also happened to be the second day of on-campus interviewing and the Law School all staff retreat), I awoke early and let my dog, Gabriel, out to explore our backyard. It didn't take long before I heard a few barks and then the most putrid, foul odor wafted through my open bedroom window into my open bedroom closet door. You guessed it, Gabriel was skunked!

Getting skunked is not the adventure anyone should seek out. After his encounter with Stinky the Skunk, Gabriel ran into the house through the open back door and rubbed his body all over my front room carpet. He was smelly. Fortunately, the groomer was able to take him and give him a special bath. The catch—because of my schedule and the groomer's schedule, I had to get dressed for work and drop Gabriel off on my way to work.

Sitting in an all staff retreat and taking on-campus employers to lunch in clothes that are still “airing out” makes for a memorable day. Eventually, I was able to remove the odor from my clothes, house and Gabriel. However, all three involved a commitment to engaging in a remediation and recovery process.

As job seekers go out into the job market and experience rejection -- generally more than once -- they can feel like they just got skunked. Just like there was a process for Gabriel, my house, and my clothes, there is a three step process for job seekers to recover from rejection and move forward with their job search strategy.

The First Step: Honest Assessment

Rejection is never easy to encounter, but the only way to change course is to honestly assess what is going wrong. Although it can be a painful moment, it will decrease the amount of time and frustration you would otherwise spend engaging in the same strategies with the same results. For instance, if you receive a lot of screening interviews, but no job offers, you need to honestly examine your interviewing skills. If you sent out a lot of applications with no interviews, you need to honestly assess whether your cover letter and resume is responsive to the employers to whom you are applying and/or examining whether the methods you are using to distribute your resume are as effective as they can be.

Most BYU Management Society chapters work closely with professionals in LDS Employment Centers. In fact, some chapters have a representative from the LDS Employment office on their Board. Utilize the expertise of representatives from LDS Employment or seasoned BYU Management Society Board members to help you pinpoint trouble spots to move into the next phase of the recovery process.

The Second Step: Retooling

After an honest assessment, it's time to change up job search strategies. For instance, if you determined that your interview skills need refreshing, you need to modify your interview

strategy. If you are limiting opportunities because you are only doing a limited amount of networking, you need to increase the amount of networking.

Depending upon your local BYU Management Society chapter, you may be able to find in depth assistance from professionals at LDS Employment. Many local chapter leaders have experience hiring and managing personnel and can refer you to others in their chapter in your desired field to assist with job search fundamentals including networking strategies, mock interviews and resume drafting. They can help you retool your job search strategy so that you can get to the final stage of the recovery process.

The Third Step: Moving Forward

The final step is the most exciting because it leads to full recovery. It's simply to execute on your new strategy. Do not let inertia take over by keeping you comfortable in old habits. Recognize and celebrate small "wins" associated with the adoption of your new strategy. For instance, if you realized that your networking efforts were lacking -- but have adopted a new networking strategy -- celebrate every time you get a new business card from someone you meet at a BYU Management Society networking event or for every BYU Management Society member who sends back an email agreeing to meet you for an informational interview. You know that as you continue to engage in new behaviors that you will eventually achieve your desired result -- a job and satisfying professional development.