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Less Noise, More Plan

Excerpted from *I Need a Job!* by Gary Burnison, Korn Ferry CEO and New York Times bestselling author.

It's the paradox of the current job market. The roles people want the most are often those being eliminated or left vacant because of automation. And the roles that companies desperately need to fill are the least sought after.

That frustration, coupled with the ability of AI to quickly tailor résumés, cover letters, and social media profiles, is prompting job seekers to apply for any job they see. The result is a vicious cycle—more and more people applying for jobs that are less and less likely to be filled.

And yet, as our firm is seeing, many people still cling to the hope that they will be the unicorn that gets the job when no one else will. And therein lies the problem.

It's brutal. I'm frustrated. Nobody is responding.

I'm hearing these comments in almost every conversation about the job market these days—as each posting attracts hundreds, if not thousands of applicants. Not only that, but as many as 70 percent of positions are now being filled by internal candidates or someone who has been referred. As for the remaining 30 percent, making it through screenings and into an interview can feel like winning the lottery.

The number of people reaching out to our firm for guidance and help is unlike anything we've ever seen. No doubt, everyone reading this message can relate.

Just the other day, someone came to me

with the same questions almost every candidate is asking: *How can I get noticed? What does it really take to land the job I want? Where can I find my next job?*

To answer, I shared a story—of all things, about going to an ice cream shop with my family many years ago. And sitting at a table in the corner was a teenager filling out an application.

When we were younger, we intuitively knew how things worked. You'd simply go to the place you wanted to work. If the manager wasn't busy, you'd more likely than not get an interview. In other words, you made a connection.

And if your friends worked there, they'd definitely put in a good word for you. In fact, you probably found out about the job from a friend who provided a warm introduction for you.

As time goes on and careers progress, of course things change. But sometimes people get the idea that technology can do all the work. Today, they might even convince themselves that all they need is an online presence

and AI will somehow find them.

The modern job hunt is louder than ever and less human than it used to be.

Landing a job these days takes so much more than simply getting a résumé into someone's hands or uploading it into a company's applicant tracking system. It's online assessing, video responding, and AI amplifying.

No wonder so many people feel dazed and confused—not knowing what to do or which way to go. It's a little like Alice in Wonderland trying to get advice and directions from the Cheshire Cat—not knowing where she should go. So, as the Cat says: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

It's time to reorient. Progress requires a plan—and that's for everyone involved in the process. Here is some advice to consider:

KNOW THYSELF – Look within before looking out. The more we know about ourselves, the better we'll be able to tell people who we are—and what we're looking for.

ASSESS FOR SUCCESS – It's both left brain and right brain—who we are and what we've

done. We're looking at both experiences and the culture that fits us best.

TARGET EFFORTS – Invest energy in the companies and roles where we can contribute and flourish.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK – It's a contact sport.

FIND A WARM INTRODUCTION – Having someone vouch for and validate—that's what gets us noticed. The six degrees of separation really do work.

HAVE A PLAN – This one matters the most. A random job search won't suffice—not for the seeker, nor for the finder. Be systematic. Step back before stepping in.

Desperation is loud; strategy is calm confidence. It's the steady hand.

Indeed, when everything else is shouting into the void, what gets through is the voice of reason. Thoughtful, mindful—in other words, a plan. ▀

Gary Burnison's new book, *I Need a Job!*, is available at most bookstores and online outlets.

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