CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Hi. My name is Richard, and I developed the Necktop Training course called "How to build web-based business applicatons" based on my own lengthy experience as a systems designer, consultant and business owner.

Now, I an NOT a HR professional, and I a have NO experience as a recruiter or career consultant. (Maybe this is no bad thing).

But I have sought, obtained, and succeed in, a long list of jobs and consultancies. I know how it is to be seeking your first job. And, I know how daunting it can be to effect a career change.

So, I am putting down my thoughts, and my experiences, on some of the ways you too can change your career. And, I am keeping it short.

Much of what I have to say is standard job-seeking methodology, which you have probably read many times before! But I still say it, because it is important wisdom.

But I also believe that the single most important thing to do is to GET INTO the right organisation in the first place, and I have added a section about this.

So, please take a few minutes to read the following. And I wish you every success in your new career …

HOW TO START OR CHANGE YOUR CAREER.

It is never easy getting your start in a new industry or new profession.

But with perseverance and determination, most people will succeed.

In this paper, I am going to give some suggestions, based on :

1. The state of the business world, post-Covid
2. Traditional and proven job-seeking theory
3. Working the "hidden jobs" market and networking
4. My personal career experiences

THE STATE OF THE BUSINESS WORLD, POST-COVID

Prior to Covid, there had been a small, but steady, fall-off in the enrolment in tertiary IT courses. There are many reasons for this, including but not limited to:

- Perceived competition from lower-paid but highly qualified candidates from the third world.

- Three decades or more of outsourcing development.

- The pace of technical change requiring constant cost and effort to keep skills up to date.

- Perceived better prospects in law, medicine, economics and business studies.

During the Covid pandemic, activity in IT system development slowed in Western countries due to :

- Businesses generally putting survival as their number one priority ; above developing and improving systems.

- The supply of cheaper labour from developing countries dried up, due to border closures and restrictions.

- Cash flow dried up, constraining the funds available for IT development.

As the business world, hopefully, emerges from the pandemics, there is therefore:

1. A backlog of work to be done.

2. A shortage of skills available.

3. A growing realisation of the costs and risk of outsourcing IT development to developing countries.

This all adds up to a much better outlook for newly trained, but inexperienced, candidates than there would be at normal times.

TRADITIONAL AND PROVEN JOB-SEEKING THEORY.

Newly trained, but inexperienced, candidates are going to fit into one of two main groups - career changes and new graduates.

Career changers need to focus on getting into the organization first. Then focus on redirecting their career along their chosen lines.

If you are a new graduate, it makes sense to start looking for work in your graduate discipline.

But, if you are a new graduate, but want or need to work in a discipline other than the one you are qualified in, then you are effectively a career-changer.

First decide whether your chosen career has inviolable qualifications. That is there is no way you are going to get a job as such without the appropriate qualifications and experience cast in stone.

For example, airline captains, heart surgeons and physics professors all fall into this category.

You cannot career change into these professions without going right back to square one and starting your tertiary education all over again.

But most jobs at the end of the day require only that you can prove you can do the job, then do it. Most IT jobs fall into this category.

IDENTIFY AND DEFINE YOUR ROLE-RELEVANT SKILL SET

Your role-relevant skill set is the collection of skills and experience that any advertised role will have specified as desirable or necessary.

You must do your best to describe how you believe you have acquired these skills and experiences, even if it only means describing aspects of a course you have taken.

You would be surprised at the number of jobs that specify 10 necessary skills, yet when all the applications are in, no one genuinely has more than two of them ! Or, where there are lots of applicants with ALL the required skills, yet none of them satisfies the personality and communication skills and is a "good fit" for the organization.

So, you must make the maximum effort in your applications. It is better to send in 5 applications in which you have given your all, than send in 25 half-hearted applications. It is all about quality, not quantity.

IDENTIFY AND DEFINE YOUR SOFT-SKILL SET.

Soft skills are the non-technical ones, not the ones specific to the roles you are seeking. Here are the most important soft skills for most business roles:

I.   Communication -   especially writing, presentation and listening

II.   Leadership

III.   Initiative and self-starting qualities

IV.   Understanding of business processes

V.   Stakeholder management ability

VI.   Time management and efficiency

VII.   Relationship building

VIII.   Reconciliation and compromise

You should choose a group of 4 – 6 soft skills that you are comfortable you possess. For each of these, explain:

1.   How you acquired the skill.

2.   What work, educational or social situations prove your mastery of these skills. Feel free to cite examples from this course!

3.   How you believe that skill will be critical for the role you are seeking.

IDENTIFY AND DEFINE YOUR TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS.

Transferrable skills are the technical and specific skills you may have acquired in past roles, or in what ever you may have done in your life if you are a new job seeker. They may not be the specific skills a particular role requires, but they still have value in many other roles. That is why they are called "transferable".

Everyone will have at least some transferable skills!

The trick is, to identify which of those will be most likely be relevant to the organisation, department or role you are interested in.

Here are some examples:

I.   You may have sales experience.

II.   You may have worked as a delivery driver.

III.   You may have some book-keeping or accountancy experience.

IV.   You may be a regular customer of a similar business and have a good feeling for what customers are likely to want. In many cases, you might have a better idea than your prospective employers! And, if this is the case, go the interview prepared to point out potential improvements.

So, identify and briefly describe these skills and experiences, and try to argue why they would benefit your prospective employer. The best way to do this is by simple research :

I.   Go through their web site to find out their values, and strategies for the future.

II.   If you are not a member of LinkedIn, then join. Try to find people that work for the company you are interested in. Check their past positions, experience, likes and dislikes.

III.   You can even try to connect with them and ask if they know anything about the position and department you are interested in. You never know, they might even give you an introduction to someone important.

IV.   Try to buy something from the company on-line (you don't have to go as far as committing and paying) You will quickly spot any tech problems they may be experiencing.

V.   Getting a quote is a great way of finding out how a business works. Especially if you then try to get similar quotes from competitors.

Clearly state the skills you have acquired by passing this course. Illustrate each by describing activities you have performed and been tested on.

Work the "Hidden Jobs" market.

Next, it is important to understand that, if you lack the specific experience cited in a job advert, you are going to be at a disadvantage when applying for advertised roles.

When an employer has posted a job advert, they already have in mind the exact person they want to hire and are probably going to have lots of

candidates from which to choose, many of which will satisfy all, or nearly all, of their criteria.

But there is a simple answer! Don't rely on answering job adverts.

Instead, try to build a profile of the kind of business that you might be a benefit to because of who you are, what you have learned and your determination, enthusiasm and energy. It is very important to convince yourself that you really want to work there.

Then approach these businesses through the "Back door". By "Back door" is meant any other door than the Personnel or HR department.

Find people who work there using social media, especially LinkedIn.

Contact them, introduce yourself, say how much you want to work there and why you would add value to the business. Ask them for introductions, or if they know of any under-staffed departments. Do they know of any departments that seem to need help, but don't yet know it?

When doing this, always project enthusiasm and a desire to help THEM. Don't project yourself mainly as someone who wants a job.

Remember that many companies pay a "spotters fee" to their own employees. That is often an incentive.

Follow these businesses on Facebook and Linked in, and make sure to subscribe. You will get a stream of announcements, plans and changes, and in any one of these you might find something you are confident you can help them with.

And, if you do see a job ad that appeals to you, but are you are not confident to apply, always put it in your diary to contact the employer in 4 – 5 weeks to see if the post has been filled. AND that the new hire is working out OK.

In many cases they may have had trouble filling it, or even filling it at their allocated budget. in which case, that job is effectively now in the hidden jobs market.

Finally, recognise that a great many jobs in the IT world are transitory – they only exist for 3 months, 6 months or one year. ***Never be afraid of making your first job a temporary one.***

And, in IT you are often primarily defined by your most recent role, even if it was only for 3 or 6 months. So a mere 3 to 6 months CAN be valuable experience.

NETWORK

Networking is a proven, effective method of job hunting.

It works brilliantly for highly experienced, highly qualified professionals with a deep resumes.

It is not so good for those with ability and enthusiasm, but little resume depth.

That is because, no matter how many contacts you have, someone somewhere still needs to be convinced why a person starting their career should be given a break. And that, in essence, is your challenge.

Networking is also time consuming, so we are going to suggest that if you want to network, you should concentrate on a pro-active campaign on LinkedIn.

First, create a convincing profile. Be HONEST. Make these points:

1. You are a career-changer.
2. You want your first break.

3. You have made the effort to do this course, which is practical, business-oriented and very demanding. That means you are a motivated self-starter.

4. Identify your soft skills and transferrable skills.

5. You are willing to work hard and learn on the job.

6. You are determined to put *more into an organisation than you take out.*

Then follow companies and organisations on linked-in and join as many relevant linked-in groups as you can.

Finally, reach out and try to connect with as many people in these organisations and groups as you can, and ask for opportunities.

MY PERSONAL METHOD – IT MIGHT WORK FOR YOU !

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE: GETTING INTO AN ORGANIZATION IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I cannot stress too much the importance of an employee's ability to add value to a business. Again and again, I have proved my number one business philosophy. It goes like this :

If you can consistently make more money for your employer than the sum of what they pay you plus the overhead of employing you, then two things will happen:

(1) They are not going to be in any hurry to get rid of you

AND

(2) You will have no problem finding other jobs.

So, it makes sense to figure out how you are going to do this before making your approach.

Then, communicate it clearly and succinctly as often as possible during the application and interview process. It just needs a little research about the company. Most of what you need can be obtained from the company's web site(s) and from the research section of online sharebroker websites. In the latter, you will find detail information on the company's products, markets, competition, financial prognosis, management, problems and opportunities.

SETTING COURSE ONCE YOU ARE IN THE ORGANIZATION.

When I left University and sought work as a graduate, I knew I wanted to develop software . As I had no actual experience as a programmer, I was happy to just take a job as a marketing trainee, with a major computer manufacturer.

I used my access to the company's computers and IT training materials to teach myself programming and system design – all in my spare time. My employer knew what I was doing, but why would they complain? They wanted their employees to multi skill as much as possible. Why wouldn't they?

After a year or so, I started to spot deficiencies in the company's software products, and ways to improve them. I also saw problems in the way products were demonstrated, and gaps in functionality between the customers' needs and what we actually offered.

I started writing some reports, making suggestions, with outline plans and costs for mediation. It didn't take long for them to offer me a job as a computer programmer, and after only one year of programming, a promotion to product manager. My whole career followed from that simple kick-start.

My point is that it is often easier to get the job you want from within a company than from without!

Once you have proved yourself a trusted and valuable employee, it is so much easier to diversify from within, than applying for a specific role from the outside. You may even, like I was, be able to specify your own job long before the need is recognised!

Once you have completed this course, you will have the means at your disposal to transform your role in the organization, however humble, into the role of your dreams. It just requires determination and hard work.

Also, application development requires good, solid knowledge of business processes. So, you could start as a humble production line worker, and come to understand what opportunities for improvement were there but hidden to management.

With your business application development skills, you might easily sell yourself up to the kind of job you really wanted, like I did! Remember that if you are in the organisation you are a known quantity, and that can be a great head start!