

Job Search:

## **Taking an entry level job just to get back to work.**

*You Can Always Go Flip Hamburgers But should you?*

By Nancy Anton

I often hear people *in transition* say, “I guess I could always go back to where I started and take an entry level position.” From watching many people through transition make decisions like this I have viewed some successes and some disasters. Hiring managers usually aren’t attracted to those who would like to be considered for an entry level position after having years of experience.

Here’s why.

A manager would prefer a candidate to grow with the job, find it interesting and challenging. Those who are high potential candidates and on the growth track are most desirable. We want to hire those who take a position that makes sense in their overall career growth. Seldom do candidates who are taking a step backward have the ability to sell a manager on their worth.

Just a year ago, we all strongly believed good people didn’t get laid off, companies kept their best. Of course, this isn’t true any longer, but have the hiring managers changed the way they think? Would they need too?

Most likely the perfect candidate is now available, with the perfect amount of experience. What would you do as a manager? Take a risk on someone who may not be happy or hire the one who will be taking the next logical step in their career? **The risk of losing the candidate that is over qualified is huge.** If the right job opens up, I’m sure they will leave. As human nature is, resentment for starting again is sometimes unavoidable, making the new hire miserable. Not many people can hide that.

I saw this scenario once while working as a career counselor with a client, Alma, who was electrical engineer. She was laid off after 10 years of experience. Alma finally came to the point in her search where she just wanted to get back to work and instead of waiting for the right opening, went and applied for an entry level, BSEE position, a position she felt she was well qualified for and could do with her eyes closed. After her first interview she received the standard, “thank you but no thank you” letter from the company. Alma was devastated. She couldn’t even get the “flip hamburger job” after all. Her guaranteed ‘fall back’ was not an option.

### **The right job fit is important**

How Alma felt about the situation made all the difference in her attitude and further search. If she allowed this to make her feel defeated, even by an entry level job, it would have hindered her ability to keep moving forward. After careful thought, Alma realized that the ‘right job fit’ is most important, even to the hiring managers. Getting turned down isn’t an insult; it’s just confirming it’s not the right fit. Just the same as getting turned down for a job she was under qualified for.

### **What happens if you do get that entry level job?**

**Dan’s nightmare.** Dan waited 5 months for the right opportunity. He was a director with more than 20 years experience, on a great track and was even considered a high potential when the company he was working for fell apart along with the industry. Dan saw many people out of work from the same background and wanted to take the advice, ‘any job is better than no job and a good job is better than any job.’ Dan applied for an entry

level sales role and with strong connections through networking, was hired. From the start of the interviewing process, Dan knew this would be a tough road.

He asked for a 6 week start date, hoping something else would come up in the meanwhile. He should have realized this was a strong indication he really didn't want to take this job. Six weeks went by quickly and he started the new role. Being placed in a bull pen environment with 10 people who all had less than 5 years of work experience was a shock. Flash backs were a daily occurrence as Dan remembered what it was like at his first job. He was back to being told what to do, under the ruling thumb of a micro-manager. Others in the office all asked him why he took this role and commented on how he really didn't seem to fit in. Interestingly, this was a new industry to Dan and Dan wasn't able to rely on his expertise.

He was living a nightmare, you know, that nightmare we all may have had at one time where we are back in High School because our transcripts were messed up and we really didn't graduate? At least you can wake up from such a dream. Dan would have to make some tough decisions. How could he wait a few years to get promoted, when he couldn't even imagine how he would find the motivation to come back from lunch?

**Rita's dilemma.** Rita was in transition for over a year and needed benefits for her family. Without any success finding a professional position, Rita turned to retail and took a position just for the benefits. The hours were scattered throughout the week and made a huge impact on the family, but she had good benefits once again. Though the working environment wasn't comfortable, the varied work schedule gave her plenty of time during the work week to still keep her job search active. Rita still had hope and still had the time to search further for the career she loved. Settling on one account gave her peace of mind, but didn't take the hope away. This was only a stop gap, something to do in the meanwhile. The only major pitfall would be if Rita got too busy to continue looking. A strong commitment to keep the search alive will shorten the transition. It's difficult to stay motivated to search while working.

### **A double-bind?**

Can we really balance our need to work, with our pride and ego? How much can we truly bend yet still be happy enough to get to work and be productive? The cost of making a bad decision is something to seriously consider during a job search. Taking a full time job you will hate will stop you from being able to collect unemployment, trapping you in a new position and seriously limiting the time needed to further conduct a job search.

### **There are several things to consider when considering that 'entry level' job before settling.**

How far can you bend? What percentage change in income can you bear without seriously changing your life style? In a professional position, most likely a 20-30% change would be the maximum one can manage without making serious changes.

How much are you willing to give up? It's a huge price to pay for the peace of mind of a paycheck. If your paycheck isn't near what was once earned, resentment and regret will make each day even more difficult.

### **Thank goodness for some unanswered prayers.**

If you do get turned down, don't take it as an insult. After Dan's first day, he too would have appreciated being turned down. Trust that companies sometimes know more than you do about the environment, management style, co-workers that they don't want to share with you. There may be good reasons why you aren't a good fit. Thank them for the response, and put your efforts into another direction.

### **You may already know it's not a fit for you?**

If you are made an offer, listen to your gut feeling. If you are finding yourself asking for a delayed start date, or you find yourself hoping for 'anything else' to come up, don't take the job. You already know, it's not a fit. If you refuse to share the news with those you're close to, also take that as a sign you are moving in the wrong direction. When we take a position we should be excited enough about the position to tell others.

## Signs that it might be a good fit for you

When considering this new position there are signs it may be a good fit.

- 🕒 Are you excited about the industry or technology?
- 🕒 Do you enjoy the people you met with and feel you can identify with them?
- 🕒 Did you meet anyone in the company you would like to aspire to be?
- 🕒 Is the company willing to promote and have a good track record of promoting quickly?
- 🕒 Can you use any of your expertise in the role?

## If unsure, ask for another interview

If you have a good feeling, even if it isn't everything you want, it could be a good move. If you still aren't sure, ask for another interview. Ask to meet more people in the company and listen to their success stories.

## The Power of Hope

Being in transition is always difficult. The thought of ending the misery is highly attractive, but not at any price. Once a position is accepted the ability to continue looking is seriously hindered. The best part of being in transition is there is HOPE that the right position will come around. Once taking a job, and being trapped in a position that isn't right, the hope is missing.

When you do come across that person, who is highly professional, asking you if you would like fries with that order, remember what it costs to do that. Smile and let them know, things change and things can change again.

## Choose carefully and have confidence the right position will come up.

Never think flipping hamburgers will be your salvation.



**About the Writer:** Nancy Anton is an expert Corporate Recruiter and Career Counselor. She has both, strong experience in corporate recruiting and contingency search. Nancy currently is the owner of Nancy Anton: The Voice on Recruiting, and is a speaker, trainer and consultant. Prior, Nancy was the Talent Acquisitions Manager for a \$5 Billion global manufacturer, Legrand North America. Nancy has been in recruiting since 1985, where she started her career as a headhunter with Hobson Associates, was trained by and worked for one of the leading speakers and trainers in the industry. She spent her days on the phone, actively recruiting to fill positions across all levels, from technical to executive, with a history of filling over 75 positions per year. Nancy is a National speaker and trainer for Corporate America delivering presentations on Hiring, Recruiting, and Career Management for companies such as Legrand, Honeywell, UCONN and Staffing Management Association/SHRM. She has published articles and is a current contributor for ERE, Execunet's CareerSmart and Recruiting Life. Nancy has trained over 2,000 recruiters sharing the fundamentals of recruiting, agency law and ethics. Nancy is a Certified Personnel Consultant, CPC and a Certified Outplacement Consultant and Career Counselor. Nancy has a Bachelor's of Art Degree in Economics. Contact Nancy at [Nanlife@gmail.com](mailto:Nanlife@gmail.com).