

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT JOB

12 PROVEN
STEPS FOR
GETTING
THE JOB YOU
REALLY WANT

**A Hands-On Manual for Every
Stage of Your Job Search:**

- Developing Career Options
- Writing a 'Knock-Out' Resume
- Locating the Perfect Employer
- Interviewing Powerfully
- Negotiating Effectively to
Get the \$ You Want

CLYDE C. LOWSTUTER
DAVID P. ROBERTSON

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*12 Proven Steps for Getting
the Job You Really Want*

Clyde C. Lowstuter
David P. Robertson

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Dedicated to the personal power within you to fully discover and manage your limitless talents, skills, and abilities. May you achieve all that you commit to while enjoying the process.

Especially to our families who love us, inspire us, and help us enjoy the journey:

*Carolyn, Nathan, and Cammie Lowstuter
Marian, Dan, and Jim Robertson*



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FOREWORD

If you have never before read *In Search of the Perfect Job* or heard of Clyde Lowstuter or Dave Robertson, then you are in for a pleasant surprise. Be prepared for fast-paced reading and insights on every page.

As management consultants specializing in career development and outplacement counseling, Clyde, Dave and their team have helped thousands of displaced employees throughout North America develop and pursue career choices. So, they really *do* know what they're talking about. They have put together a highly practical book which equips people to uncover and explore career options unique to their situation, while guiding them through the often bewildering process of job hunting. What really makes *In Search of the Perfect Job* perfect is Clyde's and Dave's ability to institute sound career search strategies from the vantage point of honest-to-goodness human beings.

I felt I was walking in the shoes of someone whose life's fabric had been suddenly torn asunder, felt all the attendant stress, fear, and rejection, insight, positive expectations, and joy of success. Both authors have personally experienced the pain of involuntary separation and the gain of effectively putting their lives and their careers back on track.

I am sure you will enjoy experiencing a proven blueprint for job-changing success as you work through the thought-provoking questions and results-producing exercises. If you utilize this book as it was intended, you will undoubtedly pick up some new ideas, become reacquainted with familiar but unused actions, and put other recommendations on the shelf for later retrieval. Nowhere do Clyde or Dave suggest that you do every single exercise to gain value from their book. Far from it. However, your progress will be accelerated if you follow the "12 Proven Steps for Getting the Job You *Really* Want" in sequence.

This well-written, user-friendly book shows great insight, a caring nature for people, and, most of all, a practical path to follow to restore one's hopes and dreams. I do not know whether to call it a novel or a text, but it is one of the finest business publications I have ever read.

Edward J. Noha
Chairman of the Boards and Chief Executive Officer
CNA Insurance Companies

A SPECIAL NOTE

When I Got Zapped—Migraines and All

In 1974 I left the organizational consulting firm with whom I was employed in Chicago to join a \$120 million manufacturer in the northern woods of upper Wisconsin. I wanted to have the practical experience of executing that which I was recommending as a consultant.

Three weeks after we moved north, Carolyn, my wife, gave birth to our son, Nathan. As you might imagine, things were quite chaotic: new job, new baby, new area of the country, new friends, and no family in the immediate area. In addition, Carolyn's mother had recently died.

I don't think at the time we could have endured many more changes in our lives. Although I tried to keep my work and personal life balanced, my workaholic nature seemed to get the best of me. There were never enough hours in the day to get it all done. Shortly after I arrived at the company I was asked to provide human resources support to the chemicals division, which was in transition with a new management team and lagging profits.

On one project, I worked numerous 90-hour weeks researching and preparing a comprehensive affirmative action plan which was the key to the pending sale of one of the company's business units. I was under a lot of pressure to complete the work quickly yet accurately. Carolyn thought I had kept crazy hours previously, but this was ridiculous. I would arrive at the office at 7:00 a.m. and seldom leave work until after 1 a.m., six days a week. My motivation? I was told that the company depended upon me to help it sell this one strategic business unit.

In the midst of all of this, my division needed some streamlining. One morning after I had heatedly hammered out some additional severance concessions from my boss to more appropriately support some recently hired senior contributors, he turned to me and said, "By the way Clyde, you're fired too." I laughed, thinking it was merely "gallows humor," given the conversation we were having. But only after seeing his pale, waxy complexion did I realize that he was serious. I remember sitting back down in a lump, feeling the rush of emotions: shock, hurt, anger, fear, vengeance, bitterness; most of all I felt violated and used.

"Excuse me, but you must be thinking of another Clyde Lowstuter. I'll go get him because you can't be referring to me! I've got a graduate degree, I was not the most recent hire, and given my consulting work throughout North America, clearly I was the most broadly experienced."

(I stopped short of saying that I was both the best looking and the most intelligent. I probably couldn't have pulled that one off even if I had tried!)

My emotional roller coaster was predictable: a prolonged disorientation alternating between red-hot anger and profound sadness. I blamed my boss: I thought he was the jerk and I was the victim. I was so ticked I couldn't see straight. I also found something else about organizations which I had not realized before: No matter the extent of the support and endorsement you had inside the company, once you get zapped, the organization closes ranks and isolates whoever got terminated. Granted, there may be a lot of sympathy, but rarely is there sufficient hue and cry to overturn the decision. It's not personal, rather it's a form of survival instinct. As hard as it was for me to realize it, the company needed to operate like this to keep on moving so it did not grind itself to a halt agonizing over these kinds of decisions once they were made.

I'll never forget the sights, sounds, and sensations as I drove up the small hill leaving my office with some of my personal effects. Everything seemed so hazy, yet incredibly vivid. The barber, in his small two-chair shop at the top of the hill continued to cut hair in the fifties' style for which he was known, and a young boy was filling his bicycle tire from the air pump at the corner gas station. It looked like a scene out of a Norman Rockwell painting. I had my window half-way rolled down ready to scream out, "The bomb has dropped! Run for your lives and take cover!" only to catch myself. The bomb had indeed dropped. On me, though, not on anyone else. My life had suddenly been turned upside down, yet no one else seemed to be affected. Strange. Very strange. It was one of the most surreal experiences of my life.

Within a matter of days, the projects I was working on got absorbed by others or dropped. Interestingly enough, it was as if the projects which were deemed to have a high priority several weeks ago now seemed to be contaminated, as if to imply that anyone assuming responsibility for this work would suffer the same fate. Consequently, there was no passion or commitment to see these programs through to completion.

It was a rough time for me. I thought of myself as confident, assertive, and competent, yet all that was shaken to the core. I got migraines, gained weight, lost weight, and fiddled away the modest six weeks of severance, with no outplacement. It wasn't for the lack of trying, I was just badly beaten up in the process, not unlike being run over by a truck and living to tell the tale. Sure, my boss could have terminated me more effectively (and compassionately), but I'm convinced he didn't because he was frightened of how I might react.

So in effect, I got exactly what I had created in the relationship; I wrote the script and my boss played out his role. I'm convinced that he did not see me endorsing him, so why should he endorse me with a

more generous severance package or a longer notice? Before my termination, my boss was probably as frustrated with me as I was with him. It's a shame neither one of us had the foresight to stop the destructive cycle. Unfortunately, the termination of our relationship was unnecessarily messy, on both of our parts. The more adverse reaction my boss received internally from his peers, the more he tried to justify his actions, which made me even more angry when I heard about some of his explanations. I only wish I had been able to create the much-needed emotional distance to put my upset in perspective.

Clearly, I was stuck. It was only through the tireless loving support from my family and friends that I was able to survive and get back on track. The ownership of my dismissal went through some distinct cycles, not unlike my emotional roller coaster. My boss fired me. I thought he was wrong, myopic, inflexible, and had difficulty sharing authority. Clearly, he did not know how to handle high-energy, creative professionals. I blamed him. I also blamed myself for confronting him openly in staff meetings and for falling asleep in every windowless, smoke-filled production meeting. (What can I say? It was hot and stuffy and I was up all night with a kid with colic.)

Once I pushed through all the blame, I realized that there was much more personal power in my accepting complete responsibility for how my career and life looked, rather than rationalizing my termination by assessing fault. The "context" of fault requires that someone be wrong, that blame be levied, and that roles of victim and persecutor be assigned. I didn't want to blame anyone anymore.

When I finally worked this out for myself, I realized that I had wasted a lot of energy making my old boss wrong and me right. In the final analysis, I was disruptive to what he wanted and needed for his department, regardless how talented I felt I was. Although he had made a business decision, it felt deeply personal. He wasn't wrong, he was right to terminate me if there wasn't a fit. I'm only sorry neither one of us had the courage or insight or skills to candidly discuss the status of the relationship. Had we been able to do so, a tremendous amount of trauma and years of recrimination would have been avoided.

This book reflects the lessons I personally learned from this experience as well as from our work with over 15,000 displaced employees in the past 11 years. As you read this material you may find yourself being described in the examples or you may relate personally to some of the people mentioned. All names of people and organizations have been altered to maintain confidences. Any resemblance to actual people is strictly coincidental.

Clyde C. Lowstuter

PREFACE

This Book Is for You If . . .

- You have ever wished for more control in your career or knew you could advance to greater heights, if only given the chance.
- You have ever felt that you have the talent, skill, values, and personality to enjoy a truly rewarding personal life, yet it keeps slipping out from your grasp before you have the opportunity to fully master it.
- Your career seems to be stalled, stuck, or not moving quickly enough.
- You aren't "politically connected."
- Your company is undergoing change, possibly due to increased or decreased sales, a merger or acquisition or stiffer competition.
- You have been terminated, or you suspect that your job is in jeopardy.

If you can identify with any of these, then keep reading; you've found the right book. Please do not be intimidated by its size—it really is easy reading. If you skim the contents, you'll notice that a number of Worksheets help you accomplish what you want; here we avoid a "cookie cutter" approach to job-changing success. The exercises are critical to bettering your understanding of yourself and your career. In addition, a number of sample scripts in the book serve to "coach" you through particularly sensitive encounters.

In Search of the Perfect Job was written to enable individuals like yourself to take control—to more effectively manage your careers and personal lives. Unfortunately, countless people sleepwalk through life, unaware of their marvelous talent and potential. And if they get a glimpse of their potential, they more than likely become frightened at the prospect of greater success. Many unconsciously sabotage those efforts which could lead to a more exciting and richer life and career.

This book will help you unlock your potential and discover those areas of your life which "roadblock" you as well as those that empower you. Through a series of interactive exercises you will create a focus for your career and identify those organizational environments and working relationships which are best for you and those in which you will flourish. This book is a road map for how to achieve your career dreams, one that you can tailor to meet your own unique needs.

Zero In on What You Need at Your Own Pace

"The 12 Proven Steps for Job-Changing Success" have been designed to work together or separately, if you want to zero in on one particular section ahead of another. For instance, although you may not have your résumé as powerfully written as you'd like, you have an opportunity to interview for an important job. Turn to Step 8, "Interviewing Powerfully," and study up on how to effectively manage the interview by taking a proactive position, asking penetrating questions, and volunteering information that uncovers data not normally revealed in the interview.

In addition, you will learn how to handle stressful interviews and how to recover gracefully and confidently when you've "blown it." In effect, we help you "peel back the layers" of a prospective employer so you can accurately assess if this is the right fit for you while clearly distinguishing yourself from other job candidates.

So, utilize *In Search of the Perfect Job* in a way that works for you. Read this book like you would a newspaper—initially skimming those topics of greatest interest to you. Then, go back and study in detail each section you feel you can benefit from.

If you want to . . .

Get a better handle on what you want to do with your life and your career

Develop a powerful result-oriented résumé which prompts companies to call you for an interview

Find out where the right jobs are and how to talk to the hiring manager

Learn how to interview better, increase your confidence, and create offers

Then study and work on . . .

Step 2: In Search of Who You Are: Uncovering Your Talents, Skills, and Career Options

Step 3: Writing a "Knock-Out" Résumé and Marketing Letters That Get Read!

Step 6: In Search of the Perfect Employer

Step 8: Interviewing Powerfully: Beating Out Your Competition

How to Use This Book

Instead of chapters, each major section of this book has been written as a Step. Each Step contains materials, exercises, and challenges which will provide you with the effective tools for job hunting and a well-organized process that works. These are to be considered *steps for getting the job you really want*.

Acknowledgments

It is difficult to identify all the people who have helped make this book a reality, because so many people have influenced our thinking and contributed to us.

Thanks go to our families who encouraged us, provided suggestions, and offered support when writing at even the most bizarre hours.

Rod Deighen first gave us our start in this form of consulting full time, for which we are forever in his debt. Our friend, George Morrissey, author or coauthor of 14 books, was always steadfast in his support of this project, offering ideas, critiquing materials, and providing reality checks. Thanks also to our many colleagues whose testimonials you read, for their input and guidance. It was much appreciated.

Deep-felt appreciation and love to the entire consulting team at Robertson Lowstuter whose perspectives you engage in as you complete exercises or read text: Ann Collins Baker, Win Gould, Patt Reed, Tom Moffat, and Scott Anderson. To Kenna Washington who reassured and educated us regarding computers and to Cynthia Arnold and Dorie Schultheiss for their typing support. A special thanks to Ginny Hilgart-Roy upon whose shoulders this project rested. It was through her tireless and gracious typing and administrative skills that this book came into being. Jill Novak graciously provided the artwork for some of the models presented.

We deeply appreciate Betsy Brown, McGraw-Hill Senior Editor, and her faith in our work, as well as Ted Nardin, Publisher, and Caroline Levine, Senior Editing Supervisor, for their ongoing efforts to make publication of this book possible. In addition, we would like to thank Phil Crosby who graciously introduced us to the folks at McGraw-Hill which steamrolled into a great relationship.

We are indebted to our client organizations and the thousands of individuals they entrusted to our care and with whom we were privileged to serve.

A special thanks goes to the rest of our team at Robertson Lowstuter, Inc., who helped create an organization where innovation, service, compassion, humor, and results are the standard.

*Clyde C. Lowstuter
David P. Robertson*

About the Authors

Clyde Lowstuter and **David Robertson** are principals of Robertson Lowstuter, Inc. (RL), a leading management consulting firm in Chicago which specializes in equipping organizations and individuals to operate more effectively. Through breakthrough approaches in the field of career development, performance improvement, and organizational change, RL empowers individuals to create and explore options in their lives, both on and off the job. They and their team help individuals through the trauma of termination, getting them quickly back on track, launching successful, well-organized job searches. In addition to their corporate-sponsored outplacement, two RL programs, *Living in a Changing Organization*SM and *Career Enhancement*SM revitalize valuable people, avert termination, and strengthen organizational effectiveness.

RL's client list reads like a Who's Who in publicly traded and privately held manufacturing, service, and nonprofit organizations throughout North America. During the past ten years, the authors' distinctive approaches to careering have enabled over 15,000 people to make rewarding and fulfilling career moves.

For more information about Robertson Lowstuter's capabilities, resources, and programs, or to order the audio cassette, "Empowering Your Career," developed by Clyde Lowstuter, call toll free 1-800-398-2665.

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