

Sept. 2009

Q & A with Karen Colligan

Meet Karen Colligan

Karen is an industry-recognized leader in career, leadership and team development. Karen is also the author of the popular, **The Get Real Guide**TM to Your Career – *A No Non-sense Plan for Finding the Work You Want.*

For more than 15 years, Karen has been providing professional guidance to career seekers and professionals in career-transition. Please feel free to send a personal email to Karen at kcolligan@peoplethink.biz. She will answer your question as soon as possible and may also post your question to our website site as a resource for others.



QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

SHOULD I FOLLOW UP AN INTERVIEW WITH A THANK YOU TELEPHONE CALL, OR IS SENDING A THANK YOU NOTE SATISFACTORY?

Karen's ADVICE:

Sending a thank you note is satisfactory. I recommend sending a handwritten thank you whenever possible. Yes, an email thank you can work. However, why not stand out from the crowd and spend a few extra minutes to handwrite your thanks? Also, thank the interviewer for something specific—a particular insight they gave you about the company or position; feedback on your resume; or whatever it was that will reinforce your appreciation—and make you more memorable.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

WHEN I APPLY FOR A POSITION ONLINE, SHOULD I ALSO SEND A COPY OF MY RESUME TO THE COMPANY VIA REGULAR MAIL?

Karen's ADVICE:

If the company requests that you apply online do just that. They have a process in place and want you to follow that process. By sending a hard copy you are advising them that "you don't follow the rules." That is not the way to establish a good first impression.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

I HAVE TRIED CALLING EXECUTIVE RECRUITERS AND DON'T RECEIVE A RETURN PHONE CALL. IS THIS NORMAL?

Karen's ADVICE:

Yes, that is normal. Executive recruiters can be very useful, however, realize that they should be just one aspect of your multi-pronged job search strategy. Do some research on the recruiters you are contacting and see whether you have anyone in your network that can connect you. Also, try to find recruiters that are specific to your industry. It's a good idea to form and develop relationships with those recruiters so you can be on the top of their list when a job specification comes through their door/computer.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

IF I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING FOR AN ENTIRE WEEK FOLLOWING AN INTERVIEW, IS IT APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO CALL THE COMPANY? WHOM SHOULD I CALL—HR OR THE HIRING MANAGER?

Karen's ADVICE:

It all depends (don't you hate this answer?). What were you told when you left the interview? That is your key to when/if you should call them. If they said, "we will get back to you within a week" then yes, it is appropriate to call them. Call the person who gave you that information. If they said, "we have additional candidates and will get back to you," I would wait about 7 working days before picking up the phone. What's important is to have made a connection with the hiring manager and HR person. When you close the interview, lay the groundwork for follow up: "I am very interested in this position. When can I look forward to hearing from you?" That will be your cue on when to call.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

AS I AM LOOKING FOR WORK, I AM AFRAID TO BE TOO SPECIFIC. I AM CONCERNED ABOUT NOT SAYING EXACTLY WHAT AN EMPLOYER IS LOOKING FOR, AND AS A RESULT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR THE JOB. WHAT DO I DO?

Karen's ADVICE:

It is critical for you to be able to clearly and concisely articulate the work you are looking for. Think about it this way: if you can't articulate what you want, how will the person you are speaking with be able to determine if you have the right skills, abilities and talents for the job? Many job seekers think that if they throw out a big net, they will capture more opportunities. The truth is that this approach actually confuses employers. My recommendation is to focus on 1-3 different types of positions and have a very clear message for each position.

Q & A with Karen Colligan

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

I HAVE A LOUSY NETWORK. I KEEP HEARING THAT “YOU WILL FIND YOUR JOB THROUGH YOUR NETWORK.” HOW DO I BUILD A MORE ROBUST NETWORK?

Karen’s ADVICE:

What you are hearing is absolutely true. There are plenty of jobs out there and you have to be much more of a detective these days to discover them. Reach out to everyone you know.

If you don’t currently have a large network, proactively build one!

Attend some of the professional networking events in your industry. Join LinkedIn and participate. Volunteer. Attend your school alumnae meetings. Join online forums and associations.

Online tools have made it easy to virtually participate if it isn’t possible to attend in person. Get out of the house and away from your computer; I know sitting in front of your familiar screen seems easier and can feel somewhat like a safe haven. However, with a little more risk comes a little more reward.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

I AM HAVING DIFFICULTY DEVELOPING MY KEY MESSAGE. WHAT DO I DO?

Karen’s ADVICE:

This is very common. We have a tendency to look at our past work history and, based on those facts, determine what’s next. The more important component is to re-discover who you are today by completing an exercise I refer to as “Taking Inventory.” Review your skills, your values, your accomplishments. Write them down. What are the barriers that have stopped you in the past? Write them down also. Once you clarify who you are today, new doors will open for you. No matter how many years you have been working, the person you are today is not the same person you were when you started your career. **Refocus on who you are today and build your job search campaign based on the updated you.**

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

WHEN I GET READY TO GO ON AN INTERVIEW, I FIND MYSELF GETTING REALLY NERVOUS. I AM A CONFIDENT PERSON AND YET, SOMETHING HAPPENS. WHAT DO I DO?

Karen's ADVICE:

Oh...is that the "sweaty palm" situation? Yes, I know it well. I think we all do. **The most important thing is to be prepared for the interview. Do your homework.** Research and obtain as much information about the job you are interviewing for as possible. Your competition will! Understand the company's business and values. Be able to articulate why you are the best candidate for the job.

Think about some objections that might come up, and be prepared with your answers. What are the 3 most important things you want the interviewer to know about you? Be ready to share these points. Think about what you do when you get nervous – do you tap your fingers, does your leg shake, do you play with your hair? Whatever it is, pay attention and try not to do it. Dress well, be polite and mind your manners. Did I say be prepared?

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

I KEEP HEARING THAT MY WORK ALSO HAS TO BE "MY PASSION" AND THAT I MUST FIND "MY PASSION" IN MY WORK. I AM HAVING A LOT OF DIFFICULTY BECAUSE I CAN'T FIGURE THIS OUT. WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO FIND MY PASSION?

Karen's ADVICE:

I am asked this question ALL the time. I always answer this question with a question: "Why do you have to find your passion in your work?" I know...I know...I am not supposed to say this; however, I mean it. **It is absolutely OK to have a full life that you love to include more than just your career.**

This is a personal decision. For people who know their passion...good for them. For those that aren't sure, I give you complete permission to *like* what you do and still have a full and satisfying life. The last thing anyone needs right now is more pressure. My hope is that this perspective will relieve some of the pressure about finding work for which you have passion.

QUESTION for Karen Colligan:

I GET DISCOURAGED WHILE I AM LOOKING FOR NEW WORK. HOW DO I GET OUT OF MY "FUNK?"

Karen's ADVICE:

I know how tough it can be while in job-search mode. Job seekers experience many ups and downs. Here's my guidance: If you are feeling down and in a funk, allow yourself to be in a funk. **Give yourself a limited timeframe.** For example – "I will give myself the rest of the day and evening. When I wake up tomorrow it will be a new day." Unless you allow yourself to feel what is going on, you can't move through it. Once the next day rolls around, remind yourself that "the funk" is officially over and move forward into positive territory.

When you are in a negative space, be careful with your behavior and words with others. On the other hand, when you are feeling positive and optimistic, take full advantage of this highly productive attitude. This is when you want to be out and about, actively networking and looking for work.