

Market yourself to overcome the past

By Mildred Culp WorkWise Interactive

Q: I haven't worked for over a decade. I'm going to school for my second AA, this time in health care. I'll look into jobs in medical records in a hospital, skilled nursing facility or physician's office. My felony conviction, which led to three years of probation with restitution, is still on my record. I also have a disability controlled by medication. The gap in my work history will raise questions. How do I handle them?

A: Goodwill Industries helps people who've had brushes with the law find work. Don't volunteer information about either problem until you receive an offer or until a background check comes up. Then, make the felony sound like ancient history. State that it was your "only" offense and give the year.

When the gap comes up, say that you were taking personal time, regrouping by getting more education and new direction. Mention your health problem only when you're offered a job. Be prepared to tell them what accommodation you need.

These two problems are significant. Consider starting a business. It could be related to your educational background or not. Doing so will assure you that neither problem-nor the two together-will hold you back.

REVERSING THE 'PERPETUAL PAUSE'

Q: My career is at a standstill. I've been diligent in my search for work in HR, without success. The field has very limited opportunities. I can't get even minimum-wage positions and I'm beyond destitute.

I'm on perpetual pause. Should I look for alternatives, even if it means more debt? Do I continue to search in my current field? Do I pursue undesirable and desperate work? Will I ever get back into my field? If so, how? If not, is it time to make peace with the status quo . . . whatever that is or may be?

A: To create a future in this horrible market, you have to try everything, because you can't predict what will work. The most important thing is marketing yourself, but find some free help with the writing part of your campaign.

Keep reminding yourself that being at a standstill is temporary, that you must spread your wings in all possible directions and continue to be diligent. Giving up isn't an alternative for someone who has your work experience. You have something to sell. Look for one buyer.

(Mildred Culp welcomes your questions at culp@workwise.net. © 2010 Passage Media.)

Online savvy

Executive search consultant **Dora Vell (vell.com)** has watched applicants omit contact information and "pour their heart out to strangers . . . potential employers and recruiters" on their online resumes.

Vell has developed online ads to recruit executives, staff members or a household worker. "It always amazes me when you use a job board," she explains. "You put down exactly what you need and get responses that are out of this world. For example, 'I need a housekeeper to clean my house, cook, drive my kid around and run personal errands Monday through Friday for 30 to 40 hours.'"

How do job hunters respond? "Well, I don't like to cook; I don't work Fridays; and I don't clean," she reports. "But I can do some of your errands. Can I work 40 hours?"

Are executives any better? "I tell them they need to relocate to Boston. Then they ask whether it's OK to commute," she says.

"If you can't do any part of the job or be available for work, why are you applying?" Vell asks. Hey. Save a little time to do some person-to-person job hunting.

Dora Vell is the CEO of Vell Executive Search, a premier retained technology executive search firm in Boston. Ms. Vell is an internationally recognized expert in recruiting technology executives including: CEOs, COOs, CTOs, CMOs, CROs, board members and others. She works with VC-backed, PE-backed private companies and public companies. She can be reached at dora@vell.com.