

Job seekers with 'learning' attitude have more success

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Many New Year's resolutions often involve finding a different career path. A new joint study by University of Missouri and Lehigh University researchers found that job seekers with attitudes focused on "learning" from the job-seeking process will have more success finding their dream jobs.

"Attitude means a lot," said Daniel Turban, a professor of management at the MU Trulaske College of Business. "In our study, we found that job seekers who have a 'learning goal orientation' or a natural disposition to learn from every situation in life, tend to be more successful in achieving their career goals. We also found that this disposition is not just influenced by genetics; it can be acquired."

In the study, Turban and Serge da Motta Veiga, lead author on the study, focused on college seniors who were currently in the job-search process. Turban and da Motta Veiga surveyed approximately 120 individuals at different points during the job-seeking process. The data were collected while da Motta Veiga was a doctoral student at the MU Trulaske College of Business; he is now an assistant professor of management in the College of Business and Economics at Lehigh University,

People who had a strong learning goal orientation (LGO) reacted to failures by putting more intensity into the search process compared to job seekers who had a low LGO. Additionally, when the process was going well, individuals with a high LGO maintained or slightly increased their intensity, while those who had a low LGO decreased their intensity.

"It's not that people with a high LGO have less stress, but they deal with the stress better than others," Turban said. "With the right amount of stress, individuals with a high LGO increased their intensity, and as a result, were more successful with reaching their goals. We always think stress is bad, but that's not the case. Feeling a moderate amount of stress can be very motivating."

Turban and da Motta Veiga also said that it's not just about genetics. People with a low LGO can learn techniques or behaviors to help them improve their LGO so they handle stress and failures better.

"Job seekers can be trained to improve their LGO," da Motta Veiga said. "Such training could help them realize that the stress and failure they experience while searching for a job is not a bad thing, but instead represents an opportunity to learn from the process and determine how they can be successful at it."

Turban and da Motta Veiga said that it's best when job seekers spend time reflecting on how they are doing. The more intentional job seekers are about learning from the process, the more successful they are likely to be in their job searches, Turban said.

The study, "Are affect and perceived [stress](#) detrimental or beneficial to [job seekers](#)? The role of learning goal orientation in job search self-regulation," was published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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