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***Ask the Expert* Chat Series**

**April 27, 2010 – Effectively Using Your Time During the Job Hunt**

**Moderators – NRC Staff**

**Expert – Robin Roman Wright, MA, ADHD Coach**

**Moderator 1:** Welcome to today's Ask the Expert chat, "Effectively Using Your Time During the Job Hunt." Our expert this afternoon is Robin Roman Wright.

Robin Roman Wright provides ADHD & Career coaching by telephone and in-person. Her office is North of Boston, in Andover, Mass. Robin has been in business for nine years providing coaching, training and consulting services. She has a master's degree from the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration. She draws on her background in counseling and human development as she helps clients identify their skills, talents and gifts.

Robin helps clients set goals, move forward and stay on track. She specializes in working with people who have ADHD, offering customized coaching that is strengths-based, structured and supportive. She works with clients to enhance time management, organizational and decision-making skills as well as improve study habits. She also helps clients identify their talents and skills and articulate where, within the world of work, they might find fulfillment and joy. While she works with people of all ages, she particularly enjoys working with young people, teens and young adults ages 15 – 29.

Robin has served on various non-profit and community boards and committees including: member, National Council of Networks, American Society for Training and Development, Executive Board Secretary, Massachusetts Chapter ASTD, Member Strategic Planning Team for the Wilmington School Department, and Advisory Committee Member Higher Education Resource Centers.

Thank you Robin Roman Wright for joining us! Are you ready to begin?

**Robin Roman Wright:** Yes, I am ready. I am so glad to be here today.

**Moderator 1:** And now for our first question.

**Jay:** Robin, Thank you for leading this discussion. My ADD diagnosis came very recently and my question is basic: I am in my mid-40's and in the process of a career change. I do not know what I want to do next. What steps can I take to discover my next job/career, taking into account my ADD?

**Robin Roman Wright:** It is very important to identify your talents and skills. It is important to set a direction for a next step based on a picture of your "ideal" job. You also need to understand your ADHD. What are the things that get in your way? What are some work-a-rounds that you can devise so that you can be successful despite the limitations.

Next you need to carefully research the marketplace. You need to identify the companies, the people, etc. where your skills and knowledge are needed.

**julieNJ:** With two kids and a house to take care of how do I balance homemaking duties with job search???

**Robin Roman Wright:** It is important to learn to schedule if you don't have a system already. This is quite difficult for people with ADHD. Yet, there are ways to learn. If someone is looking to obtain full-time employment in a professional type job, it is important to set aside 5 hours/ day to the job hunt. If you are not looking for a full-time job, you won't need to set aside so much time, but you will need to set aside some time every day.

Obviously, this has ramifications for a Mom with two kids. Try to find supportive people who can help you with child-care. If your children are older, see if you can have them take on some of the responsibilities at home.

**Bet:** How can I help my young adult with ADHD succeed in the job hunt?

**Robin Roman Wright:** I work with teens and young adults. I think teens and young adults need the encouragement and support of their parents. It is important to help your teen or young adult identify their strengths, the skills that they exhibit that might be valuable in the workplace.

Often, teens and young adults with ADHD have experienced some degree of failure in the school environment. This can discourage them. It is important to help them realize that in the workplace they might do, and probably will do, just fine.

I highly recommend Carol Christen and Richard Bolles' new edition of *What Color Is Your Parachute? for Teens*. You can read the book, it is an easy read. Then you can decide if you want to suggest that your teen read it.

**Justonejones:** Can you give some specific examples of what you do to coach a young adult? How often do you connect with them and how long does the relationship typically last? thanks!

**Robin Roman Wright:** To help a teen or young adult with career exploration, I typically work with the teen or young adult for 4 - 8 sessions. The first step is to help them identify some goal or goals. What do they want to see different about their life in 1 month in 2 months in 3 months? Usually, if they are there

for career direction, they want to have a better idea of what career they can begin to pursue that will fit them and where they will be successful.

The next step is to help them identify stories, life stories. These stories will be short examples of where they enjoyed doing something and the outcome was good. After a teen identifies 5 stories, we then pick the transferable skills that the teen exhibited in those stories.

Next we proceed to complete other exercises that help the teen articulate the 7 factors that matter to them in an "ideal" job. The market research comes next. We identify 3 job targets that might match the teens "Picture of their ideal job."

Then we use the web, the library, contacts the teen might have access to so that the teens gets to learn about the realities of those jobs. We also identify the teens ADHD issues. What might get in the way of the teen being able to successfully complete the training needed for this job? What are the teen's social skills? Can we help the teen develop some compensatory strategies where he or she shows weakness?

**Tamingadd:** With the understanding that networking plays a major role in job hunting now, what would you tell someone who gets anxious in social settings?

**Robin Roman Wright:** There are a number of things that I have worked on with clients who get anxious in social settings. First, in today's computerized world, some networking can be done online. Clients are encouraged to contact people by e-mail.

Clients are encouraged to use social networking sites like LinkedIn. This can often lessen a person's anxiety because by the time a face-to-face or phone conversation is set up, they know something about the person.

Also, by the time they meet the person by telephone or in-person, they have received permission from the person for the meeting. In preparation for the face-to-face meeting, I encourage clients to get very clear about their Elevator Speech.

I also conduct role-plays of the social interaction with clients. You can ask a trusted friend to help you practice meeting and greeting people.

**Aileen:** I have always been a jack of all trade but master of none and I really want to concentrate on one and capitalize on it instead of going around in circles and finding myself in my early 40's without a career or a set future.

**Robin Roman Wright:** This is a perfect time to take stock. What have you done in the past that you liked? What have you done that you never want to do again? Write out your answers. There is a book I recommend, called the Perfect Resume by Tom Jackson.

In the book, he has something called, The Job Family Game. This game helps job seekers brainstorm a huge list of possible roles they might be willing to take on in a number of different fields. When I work

with a client on this game, they often realize that they do have a passion, something that they really want to spend time learning, something that gets them excited.

They can also begin to see that they might be able to "break into" that field in a non-conventional way. Maybe start in a role that isn't their first choice, but would "get them in the door" and they could move into a more desirable role later on.

**Moderator 1:** Before our next question, you should know that the NRC produces a series of Information Sheets. All of our "What We Know" Sheets are found at <http://help4adhd.org/en/about/wwk>, including our [WWK #16 on Succeeding in the Workplace with ADHD](#).

**Snowyogi:** I know my blind spots (weaknesses). In particular, I have difficulty with prioritization and not hyperfocussing. As a Sales Engineer, sometimes the role requires being a project manager, which I know from having picked the wrong job and being fired before, is bad for me. How do I make sure in the interview that the role does not require me to use skills that are in one of my blind spots? How should I handle the classic "what is your weakness, and how do you manage it?"

**Robin Roman Wright:** This is a two-part question. Let's start with the difficulty prioritizing. One tool that clients find useful is the Priority Quadrants. This is from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. The point of the Quadrants is to help you divide the work you have to do into 4 parts. Part one is Important and Urgent; Part II is Important but Not Urgent; Part III is Not Important and Urgent; Part IV is Not Important and Not Urgent.

The work that you might have to do related to project management usually fits into the Important but Not Urgent category. This kind of work can be difficult for some people with ADHD because it requires you to plan to do work that is not immediately necessary for that day. However, if left undone for too long then it becomes an emergency and you have a mountain of work to accomplish within too tight a timeframe.

Using the Quadrants can help you "see" the work to do that is important next to the work that is urgent. I find clients can better make themselves devote time to a task if they can visually "see" its importance.

For more on this I suggest reading *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. (It is also on tape.) I especially recommend *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* for adults with ADHD as it is prescriptive and easy to read.

In terms of the options for you as you cull through job openings and engage in the interview process, I think the best option is to do your homework about a company before the job interview.

Hiring managers prefer to hire people who are recommended by those they know. They prefer to hire people who are currently working in their company as part-time staff, or contactors or in other roles. Lastly, they prefer to hire unknown candidates who bring examples of their skills and work to the interview - such as photos of cakes that a Head Baker has made.

Before you even decide to apply to a company, it would behoove you to know some of the workers in that company who do similar work. If the company has a culture that rewards fighting fires and thinking quick on your feet in the moment and that is your skill (as opposed to managing a long range project) you will know that this is a fit for you.

You could also find this out by doing contract work for several companies and then learning which companies are likely to require someone in your position to do less long-range project management.

**iRob:** When in the process do you or should you mention that you have ADHD? What if an application for unemployment asks if you have a disability. Should you say yes (if it is ADHD?) and what more specifics, if any do you need to or should provide on the application?

**Robin Roman Wright:** CHADD has a very good publication on this. My recommendation is to not disclose your ADHD unless you have thoughtfully decided it is necessary. The concern is that you want the interviewer to pick you from a pile of candidates who are applying for the job. In your resume and your application you want to highlight your strengths. You want to pick a job type that you think you can excel at even though you have ADHD.

Hopefully, you will be able to do the job by putting in extra time to learn the job, or by getting an informal group of people around you to help you or by hiring a coach. The CHADD publication speaks about the laws and what options are open to you.

**Moderator 1:** Being a CHADD member not only provides valuable members only benefits, such as Attention magazine, to you and your family; it also supports CHADD's work on behalf of individuals with ADHD at the local, state and national level. [Join CHADD today!!!](#)

**julieNJ:** All I've been doing is networking. One hour call with old colleague and then facebook and linked in. How do I monitor myself?

**Robin Roman Wright:** I recommend that clients make use of whatever free resources there are in the community. It seems like you need to know about the components of a good job search plan.

One great resource is the One Stop Center throughout the country. You can find one near you at [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org). These are what is commonly referred to as the "Unemployment Office."

There is a great demand for the resources at these centers right now but I have had clients who have been able to register and start taking classes, etc. The One Stops have classes on putting together your job search, resume writing, job interviewing, etc. Many of the workshops are free.

They also have some coaching available. When you meet with these coaches you can disclose your ADHD. The coaches may not be experienced with helping people with ADHD, but I think they would be responsive if you explained that you need the information in small chunks and you need help in figuring out what to do first.

Also, you can engage a career coach who also is familiar with ADHD. The 7 steps to launching a successful job search are:

- 1) Define where you are going - involves identifying the 7 factors that matter to you in an ideal job. Also involves identifying 3 job targets that fit you
- 2) State your case about why you would make an effective candidate
- 3) Write a clear, grammatically correct, visually appealing resume
- 4) Prepare/ know the 5 W's and 1 H about each prospective employer
- 5) Polish-up on your interviewing skills
- 6) Send a thank-you note
- 7) De-brief after each encounter with a prospective employer

**iRob:** Where is a good place to go to figure out what careers are most suitable for people with ADHD

**Robin Roman Wright:** Dr. Hallowell and Cathy Corman wrote a book called, *Positively ADD*. In the book, they interviewed 15 or so successful people and identified what led to their success. In *Positively ADD* the keys to success mentioned are:

- People doing what they are passionate about
- People doing what they were naturally gifted/ skilled at doing
- People rarely took conventional routes to success
- Did not give up when met roadblocks - even when they were of their own making

I think that people with ADD are in all kinds of fields and roles. I think that each individual needs to do the work of identifying their talents and skills as well as their limitations.

I recommend, if you want to know more about Finding a Fulfilling Career, download my free pdf file at [www.youthleadershipcareers.com](http://www.youthleadershipcareers.com) which you can find by selecting the Helpful Information tab.

Also, at that same site you can download Tom Jackson's *The Perfect Resume Kit* which he graciously agreed to allow this audience to do. In the kit, you will find some exercises for identifying your skills and getting clear about what kind of jobs to pursue.

**iRob:** I recently went through a number of job losses that were difficult and don't feel that I would be very successful if I jumped into another challenging job immediately. I will do anything to provide for my family but feel this is not the best move right now (vs. working part-time or at a low key job). What steps do you suggest such as: get a handle on my ADHD/symptoms, work part-time and do the same, or just try to suck it up and go for a full-time job while looking for a job that suits my ADHD?

**Robin Roman Wright:** I suggest that you sign up at your nearest career center and begin to use their workshop and coaching services so that you can best think this through. Also, I suggest that you think about a job that you liked in the past or a problem that you can solve that an employer might have.

I just worked with a client in a similar situation. He had had a job in a large financial institution that was quite ill-defined and that required too much independent project initiation on his part. He has been unemployed for a while. In our discussions it came out that he was a launch driver for a mooring company for a number of years in his youth.

He loved the job and he was good at it. He can quickly assess when the harbor is full and how to get people on and off their boats in the most efficient manner. We talked about how he might inquire with previous bosses if he could take on a different role - maybe as the coordinator for transient docking at a large marina as an interim step this summer.

The idea would be that this would get him in motion, doing something he loves, contacting people. There is a saying that what is in motion stays in motion. Maybe there is something similar that you could do for a short time in order to get yourself in motion and earn some income for a while.

Also, for anyone who is really feeling a deep sense of loss at having been fired from a job, or having been otherwise laid off, know that many people experience a similar sense of loss in that situation.

I recommend reaching out for help. This is the kind of situation that therapists can help with. You will feel better and be able to look to the future if you deal with the strong emotions that being let go can give rise to.

**Moderator 1:** While we are waiting, the NRC has a What We Know information sheet on legal rights in the workplace. Check out [What We Know #14: Legal Rights: Higher Education and the Workplace](#).

**Moderator 1:** We have ten minutes left. Robin will move through as many questions as possible. If we are unable to get to your question please contact one of our Health Information Specialists on ADHD by calling 1-800-233-4050 between 9 AM- 5PM EST or by clicking on the "Ask A Question" link on the top of our website: [www.help4adhd.org](http://www.help4adhd.org).

**Anita:** I've just been fired from my last job and am scared about being asked why I left in my next interview. Is there a proper way to answer this question without lying and without seeming like a bad employee?

**Robin Roman Wright:** This kind of situation requires finesse. It is important to be truthful. Employees who have lied on applications or resumes or in interviews run the risk of being fired if the company later finds out that you were not truthful.

I recommend seeing a career coach to discuss how to explain this situation. Sometimes clients are able to say that they were successful in a company in one particular role and they then were promoted to a different role.

They can then say that this second role was a stretch for them; they have assessed their skills since this happened and are now applying for the current role because it does play to their strengths.

Also, it is helpful if you have one or two recommendations from either earlier bosses, who will vouch for your reliability, problem-solving abilities, or current colleagues (even in a volunteer organization) etc. You would then offer to have the interviewer call those previous employers for a recommendation.

**Moderator 1:** This will be our final question. Thanks to everyone for all your questions! While we try to post as many specific questions as possible, we also try to post questions about different issues. We appreciate your patience.

**Zabeth:** In your experience as a coach, what are the top three things for an individual with ADHD to keep in mind in order to be successful at work?

**Robin Roman Wright:** Great question. Number 1 - You are there to solve your employer's problems. Number 2 - Try to get clear on what results your boss expects you to achieve each week. I am speaking specifically about results rather than just activities. Number 3 - If you don't know your specific skills and strengths, spend some time with a coach, counselor or self-help book identifying them.

Look for opportunities that are win-win - You get to use your skills solving your bosses problems.

**Moderator 1:** Thank you Robin! Your answers will surely provide our participants with tools that will help them find satisfying, fulfilling careers. Your understanding of how difficult and frustrating the job search can be and your supportive comments truly shows your passion in wanting to help individuals with ADHD overcome their obstacles in order to reach their full potential. Thank you again for your time and thoughtful responses.

**Moderator 1:** If you have a question that was not answered today, please contact us online (National Resource Center's Web site at <http://www.help4adhd.org> ) or by phone (800-233-4050) between 9AM and 5PM EST and one of our health information specialists will respond.

**Robin Roman Wright:** I thank you for the opportunity to share.

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