



# 7 ways to hide your job search from the boss

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(MoneyWatch) Job-seekers beware: You may be sending out certain "tells" that clue in your boss that you're looking to leave. Some of these signals are digital red flags, like a rapidly changing LinkedIn profile, while some are even more visible, like wearing a suit to the office when you normally wear casual clothes.

Here are seven ways to look for a new job without jeopardizing the one you have:

**Get your manager's eyes off of you.** If you're not in the office 9-5, your boss's suspicions won't be aroused if you step out for a meeting. "Negotiate for a work-from-home option for one or two days a week. Or, alternatively, for a flex schedule which would give you carte blanche to interview without raising suspicion," suggests Roy Cohen, author of "[The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide](#)." Cohen also suggests making a habit of regularly working out at lunch. It'll be expected that if you're out, you're at the gym. Bonus tip: Leave your change of clothes at the gym and change, Superman-style, before your appointment. This eliminates the suspicion raised by your suddenly dressing sharper.

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**Give the impression you're grabbing a quick coffee.** If you're leaving for a long meeting, like a job interview, you're probably going to take your briefcase and turn your computer off. If you're just stepping out for a coffee, or at least want to give the appearance you are, leave a jacket or seater on the back of your chair and your computer on, with the screen-saver turned off. "The impression is that you should be back momentarily even if you are out for longer," Cohen says.

**Keep your job search off social media.** Even if you're careful not to share details of your job search with colleagues, posting anything on social media puts that information out into the world. If you're not unemployed, your job search needs to be targeted and private. "Don't announce you're seeking a new job in the 'headline' verbiage on LinkedIn, in Facebook status updates or even on Twitter," says Lisa Quast, founder of employment consulting firm Career Woman. "This sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many people actively discuss their job hunt in social media and then can't figure out how their employer found out."

**Never use your work computer to look for a new job.** Many companies consider using company equipment for personal reasons a violation of policy. Using your office PC to look for a new job is even riskier, and can even get you fired. To prevent your digital footprint from being tracked or coworkers from overhearing an interview, conduct your search on your own time. Don't have a computer at home? "Ask family members or friends with computers if you can borrow access or use the computers at your local library. If you graduated from a college nearby, you can also check the availability for using the college's computer lab," Quast says.

**Reach out to contacts carefully.** It's a small world, and anyone you contact about a job in your industry may know your boss or someone at your office, says career coach David Couper. That's not a bad thing, but you need to ask for their discretion -- and exercise your own. "Ask for them to keep your job search confidential, and always remain positive about your company and colleagues. You don't want bad-mouthing to get back to them," he says.



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**Be extra careful during your performance review.** Performance reviews are a time when your boss is evaluating your standing and future at the company. If you're not happy there and are looking elsewhere, it can be easy to slip and show that during this pressurized meeting. "Sometimes an employee will try to force the boss's hand by talking about 'moving on' or 'checking out other opportunities,'" notes Couper. This emotional outburst isn't going to make him or her want to make things better for you where you are. If you end up not finding a new job soon, you could find yourself unemployed.

**Keep your online profiles regularly updated.** If you suddenly go from 0 to 60 on job-related career sites like LinkedIn, career contacts -- and possibly your boss -- are likely to notice. That's not necessarily a bad thing. "Being an active LinkedIn member prior to a proposed job search won't arouse suspicion with your managers. It will only assert the fact that you are adapting, utilizing new technology, advertising their brand and hopefully pulling in great clients and contacts," says Nicole Williams, Connection Director for LinkedIn. Want to revamp your profile without triggering your boss's radar? Adjust your settings so that connections aren't notified when you make changes to your profile (under "Private Controls"). If you're worried that your boss will connect the dots, click "Only you" under "Select who can see your connections." "That way, if you suddenly decide to connect to 15 local recruiters, your boss won't notice via status updates that these folks have been added to your network," Williams says.

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