EPISODE 19

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:07] TF: Welcome to episode 19 of Job Search Strategies with Tiffany Franklin.

Are you looking for a new job by the New Year? Well, today's guest is just the person to help you get motivated for that. I'm speaking with Raj Subrameyer, who is a tech career strategist and author of *Skyrocket Your Career*.

Raj has achieved several major goals both on the professional and personal level, from becoming an international speaker delivering TED talks, to writing a bestselling book and losing 50 pounds. He's going to share his best practices and tips for what helped him achieve this, and how you can adapt these approaches for your life.

If you need help with your resume, please go to my site tjfcareercoach.com, where you can sign up for a complimentary 20-minute session, and we can talk about ways to work together. I offer resume overhauls, cover letters, LinkedIn updates, as well as mock interviews and general career strategy sessions. So, let's get started on the episode with Raj.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:10] TF: Today, I am so excited to welcome Raj. He has done, just been so incredible, as I mentioned before, in all his talks, in his writing, and coaching, and very multi hyphenate in this world. So, welcome, Raj. Thanks for taking time from your busy schedule to connect.

[00:01:29] RS: Thanks for having me. I'm super excited to be here.

[00:01:32] TF: Raj, your book *Skyrocket Your Career* resonates with so many people, because you describe feeling like you're stuck in a hamster wheel, and tired of being unfulfilled with your work. So many people relate to that. Walk us through your career, and how you made such a dramatic transformation from your minimal paying job, to building a successful business, which allows you to devote your life to doing work you love and helping people on such a large scale?

[00:01:59] RS: I think that's a great question to start off. To answer the question, we have to go back in time to understand my background. I think my childhood experience was pivotal for my transformation.

I grew up in the southern part of India from a place called Chennai, which is one of the five big major cities in India. My dad was super smart, since he was born, he studied in scholarships. Then my brother is a genius. He has three masters and a PhD. And then there I was, the average Raj, pretty much average in everything. You name it, like sports, dating, academics. I was the average guy. I was in this constant pressure to emulate them and the other overachievers around me, because the place where I grew up from, academics is really strong. For me, I tried to be academically oriented, but I could never live up to people's expectations.

So, this constant struggle to live up to people's expectation led me into this path of anxiety, stress, depression, and I felt like an outcast. I was in a shell. In fact, funny thing, like talking to a girl would feel as if I'm going to get a nervous breakdown, right? So, I was technically a wreck. This kind of continued until my second year of my undergrad. And then one day, I had a trigger event which completely changed my life.

I started to remember this moment vividly. I was in my study room, then all of a sudden, I could feel my chest hurting, and then the pain started increasing minute by minute, and I thought I was getting a heart attack. Now, I know that was my first panic attack. But at that time, first time experiencing this, it felt like a heart attack. I found it really hard to breathe. So, I sat down, then all of a sudden, the pain from my heart shifted towards my head, and then tears just started coming out of my eyes, uncontrollable tears. I didn't know why.

For two hours, I just sat there in my study room crying because all these feelings which had bottled up inside me, throughout my childhood, just burst open. It made me realize a lot of things. One major thing which I realized was I spent the first 19 years of my life living a life for other people. I was letting other people's opinions be my reality. In the process of not disappointing other people, I was actually disappointing myself. When I came to that realization, I said, "You know what, screw society, screw people. I am going to carve my own path. I'm going to figure out my own identity, and I'm going to strive for greatness." I don't know what my passions are, but I'm going to figure it out and it's time that I take control of my life and my destiny.

I know it sounds cliché. But the point is, after that moment, I actually took a paper and pen and wrote down all my fears. I had fear of being judged, fear of being ignored, fear of failure, fear of public speaking. I wrote down those things and even though I didn't know how I was going to overcome them, I just wrote a couple of strategies, which I'm going to follow to overcome those fears one by one.

To cut a long story short, 16 years later, by taking baby steps, I've transformed my life from a shy, introverted kid earning a minimum salary, into an international keynote speaker, author and tech career strategist running a six-figure business. This is what I tell my clients, and people I talk to as well. I am an average guy. If I can make a change, so can anyone else. That's why you don't have to be born smart. It's about what you do with your life and how you reframe your mind to actually do the things you don't want to do. Because there's this beauty, and getting uncomfortable to get comfortable. That's what I tell people. That's pretty much the whole transformation process of what happened.

Of course, we can get into details of specific incidents, which helped me overcome some fears. But this was the background story and this the reason why I do what I do, all the people I help are people who resemble past Raj, who are the underdogs. Those are the kind of people I actually help. That's why I have a pre – just we do a pre podcast interview. I actually do a screening called first because I want to make sure they want to change so bad, but they don't know how to do it. I can see that they have the skill set and they're just waiting for the path and strategies and that's where I come into the picture.

[00:06:55] TF: Your story is so compelling, because first of all, that had to have been terrifying, being 19 and then suddenly, thinking you're having a heart attack, but then realizing, and all those emotions coming forth. But do you realize some people go their whole lives and never come to that realization that you did? I hear 60-year-old say that, but it's rare to have a 19-year-old have the poise to not only have that moment, but then say, "Okay, here's what it is. This is how I'm going to go forward." So, wow, kudos to you.

[00:07:27] RS: Yeah. That's why I think there are two types of people. Both types of people always hit rock bottom head first. And then, you do the similar kind of things, which is, you feel the pain, you go through those emotions, which is good, which you need to go through it. But then comes a time where you have to decide, "Okay, am I going to take action to make a change, are going to continue being in the same situation I am in?" Luckily, it just happened, that I decided to make the change at that moment, because I had this awakening through this episode. But as you said, yes, there are still people, the other side of the people who do not want to take action and then throughout their life, they still are in that show, and they're totally unhappy. That's why I always tell people that you could choose to try new things, fail at some things, learn from it, and then find what your passion is, and that will make you happy. Or you can always be in the fear of the unknown, and not take action at all, which means that you're going to have a lifetime of unhappiness. So, which one do you want to choose?

And when you say that, then people start thinking, 'Okay, that's making sense." Also, another thing since you're talking about this. People think, if you want to make a change, immediately, you have to go from 0 to 100, like a Ferrari. You don't have to do that. The point is change starts with small simple steps, and that's when transformation happens. What you see on social media is not true, folks. You'll see all these pictures of influencers with their big bungalows and their million-dollar yachts, and Lamborghinis and stuff like that. Yes, maybe they earned those things, and it took them 20 years. You don't see that. You just see the picture on Instagram. Or they're $200 million in debt, but they're still trying to have the persona because they want to maintain that social appeal.

You don't know what the true story is. That's why seeing is not always believing. Talking to people and finding the information, that's when you can start believing. In summary, what I'm trying to say is change starts with small steps, and when you set your mind that, I'm going to do the work, and say every 30 days or so, I'm going to analyze my actions and see where to pivot. I'm not saying you have to constantly do the work and do the same thing again and again, because that's insanity. Albert Einstein said that.

So, we don't need to do the same thing over and over again, if it's not working. But try something, analyze it, pivot. Try something, analyze, pivot, and that's how you're pretty much life rant. That's my belief.

[00:10:20] TF: You bring up so many things. First, I can't help but think of that saying an overnight success 12 years in the making. We just see the success part, we don't see the decade or so beforehand that went into it. I love how you're reframing it, that you're telling them to iterate along the way, that takes the pressure off that it has to be tomorrow that you're getting something done. Like even with my own coaching clients, I tell them, you don't have to get your opportunity tomorrow, just do something for the cause every day in a strategic way, and we work that out.

The other thing, I can't help but think of, being an educated consumer, when it comes to media. I have been talking to Alicia Haywood what about this in her I Speak Media, and she's got media literacy week coming up the third week of October, which is really teaching people to be educated consumers with media and don't just take everything at face value. That way, people are feeling so badly about themselves. But to your point, a lot of it is smoke and mirrors, and it's just an illusion.

[00:11:24] RS: Oh, yeah, 100%. I think, change – I know, you've been back in number change quite a bit since the start. But I really believe that change starts within yourself. You need to be ready to change, because there's the saying, right? You can take the horse to the pond, but not make a drink, and that is so true. I'm

paraphrasing that phrase, probably. But the point is, yes, you really have to feel that change. You need to have an itch to actually change your life. I think it's slightly easier for immigrants, compared to nonimmigrants. The reason is for immigrants, they come with even more baggage.

For example, I am an immigrant who came to the United States, I came in 2008, and I still remember this because I came in on August 31, 2008. And then September 7, 2008, the recession started. Lehman Brothers, one of the biggest financial firms became bankrupt overnight. That pretty much was like a landmark of the whole recession, which triggered it and getting job is really hard.

[00:12:32] TF: It was. Talk about Welcome to America. Oh, my gosh. What a time.

[00:12:36] RS: I know, right. It's not like that Eddie Murphy movie where, Welcome to America, he's has fun and stuff. But for me, it was the opposite, which is pretty much majority of immigrant's life in a foreign land where getting jobs were really hard. I already had student loans, and I didn't have money. I had come to the United States to get an education. I came here to do my Master's in Software Engineering. But the point is that the recession, it made everything really hard.

So again, I had a moment where I was left with two choices, either go back home, like half my international students, or the second option was do whatever it takes and see how you can get a job. Luckily, I chose a second option. From the beginning of 2009, to end of 2009, I applied for 1,293 jobs.

[00:13:30] TF: Wow, that's astronomical. That sounds exhausting.

[00:13:33] RS: And guess how many callbacks I got from those 1,293 jobs?

[00:13:38] TF: How many?

[00:13:39] RS: I got four callbacks.

[00:13:42] TF: That's depressing.

[00:13:44] RS: I got four callbacks. I converted one job, and that was an internship, not a full-time job. And then I worked for the next six months, to prove to people that I could do the job. And luckily, someone took a chance on me and the rest was history and backing to you right now, what 13, 14 years down the line. But the

point is, those kinds of experiences taught me a lot about myself, about how careers actually work, how mindset actually works. How do you talk to people? How do you back it yourself? How do you protect your brand? Those were all pivotal moments. Like that, I've had so many instances of learning, which I also described in the book. I talked about, what are the things I learned, then how to apply those strategies in your life as well, right? That's what the book is all about as well and that's what I do as part of my coaching, where I really give them insights into my life, showing them that I've been through different situations, and then I talk about what do they exactly do to get out of that rut, to get unstuck.

But the reason I shared this example was I think for immigrants, they have an added baggage, added obstacle to actually shine. But again, it's not impossible. But it takes a lot of effort.

[00:15:05] TF: Raj, knowing what you know now, if you could travel back in time and talk to yourself in 2008, what would you tell yourself before you started to apply to 1,200 jobs or over 1,200?

[00:15:20] RS: That's a great question. So, frankly speaking, for the first 700 jobs I applied, I was in a scarcity mindset. What do I mean by that? I was desperate for a job. I just kept applying randomly without putting any thought to it, without any strategy, without any focus.

[00:15:44] TF: So, you weren't tailoring your resume and cover letter or anything like that?

[00:15:46] RS: No tailoring resume, nothing. One single resume, just applying, applying, applying because I was in a scarcity mindset. But then, after the 700 plus jobs I applied for, then I started seeing patterns. Why is this not working even though I've done 700 freaking job applications? That's when I started getting insights. Oh, okay, there are four types of jobs I'm applying, so maybe I need to have four different types of resumes, because each resume should highlight why I'm the right fit for that particular job.

So, then I started diversifying my resume. And then the tell me about yourself question, so I started analyzing that and thought about, "Okay, how do I provide my value within two minutes succinctly?" I started getting all those insights. If it was past Raj, I would have told past Raj that, "Dude, even before applying, first figure out what jobs you want to apply for." There's an exercise which we could get to quickly if you want, it's called the mind dump exercise. But you'll do the mind dump exercise, figure out what are your strengths, and what are the things you don't want to do in life. And based on your strengths, you're going to map out three to four different types of jobs you want to apply for.

Once you figure out the three to four jobs you want to apply for, you're going to have three to four types of resumes based on those jobs. And then you're going to update your LinkedIn profile to reflect things related to those four jobs with the right keywords, and then you're going to have an Excel sheet, where you're going to track each and every job application. Because the odds are, once you get into 100 job applications, you're going to be in a grocery store, and all of a sudden, someone's going to call you and say, "Hey, I'm calling from company A, B, C about the software developer job you applied for." You have no clue about what the expectations are for the developer job boss because you have 100 jobs into your application process. That's when you can say, "Oh, it's great to hear from you. Just give me a minute, let me get into a quiet zone." But what you are doing in that one minute is going to an Excel sheet, and then looking at what job you applied for in the Excel sheet. You have the name of the job, the name of the company, the job link, and then any other added comments you want to put in and then any follow ups you did. All that information will be there in that Excel sheet, and then you can literally go to this A, B, C company, click on the job link and then figure out what they ask for it.

Now, you're going to have more relevant conversation based on the job. Those are the things I would probably do if it was the past Raj. But quickly, coming back to the mind dump exercise, I think all the listeners here could do this right now. Because it's such a simple and effective exercise people can do to figure out what their career options could be. Because the simple example of why this is important, I feel our lives are like a human GPS system.

Let's say, for example, you're using Google Maps, you can expect to reach a destination without actually putting in a destination address. Our lives are the exact same way. If you don't know what job options you want or where you're going, the effort you put, the time you put, the cost you've put in it, doesn't make any sense. So, that's where the mind dump exercise comes into picture. This is how you're going to do the exercise. Take a paper and pen and then put a vertical line in middle of the paper. On the left side of the paper, the left column, write down all the things you love to do. And then on the right side of the column, write down all the things you don't like to do or hate to do. Do this for 30 minutes to about an hour in an uninterrupted manner. No Facebook, messaging, no text messaging, but everything in do not disturb, lock yourself in the room and do this. Because this is the thing folks, all the things you want to do in life is actually in your mind. You just have to unlock it one by one and put it visually on paper. Once you put this on paper, you're going to see a lot of things you would love to do or want to do, and you're going to start seeing patterns.

So, say for example, say you identified that you like to be creative, you hate to be micromanaged, you don't like processes, and you love to collaborate with people, and you love coding. Then maybe, being a software

developer at a startup company is probably going to be a better fit for you, than being a software developer at a really large company with a stringent process. See how you're figuring are different patterns about you.

Based on this list, the things you would love to do or want to do, you're going to identify three to four career options. And then once you figure out those career options, then continue with whatever I was saying in terms of the resume, the LinkedIn profile, the Excel sheet. Also, I have an Excel sheet template, which you can download from our website, as well, for folks who are interested. But that's what you really need to do.

[00:21:01] TF: We will put all this on the show notes at tjfcareercoach.com. I always love talking to other career coaches, because I know that's just one of the many things you do, Raj. But it's so validating because I do many of the same types of things with my clients from values exercise, and getting a little meta here. But that's why I called this show Job Search Strategies, because I want people to have an effective and an efficient search. I like that if you going back in time, and basically, you're telling 2008 Raj, make it a quality, not quantity game, and also take time to strategize in the beginning, so that way, everything you're doing, it's not just throwing darts at a dartboard and hoping for the best. You're giving yourself the best chance.

Also, I like what you talked about the spreadsheet, because I do the same thing. I'll tell people have a Google Doc, have the app on your phone, so you can pull it up no matter what. But it's basically taking a data analytics approach to your own job search, where you're looking, you're learning. Just like you said, you learn, maybe this one thing wasn't the right area for you. So, then you tailor as you go. I love how you have outlined that process for yourself back then.

[00:22:14] RS: Yeah, you always have to analyze what are you doing. It comes back to what we were talking previously, where you have to do the work, but also analyze it because you need to pivot because nothing is permanent. Things keep changing. If one strategy, say, take for example, since we're talking about job search, say you follow one strategy, do it consistently for three, four weeks, because you need some data to analyze whether the things you do are working. But if something's not working, then analyze it. Okay, so this is not working. Okay, what can I do to tweak it? How about this strategy? Let's try that for the next two weeks and see how it is.

It's this whole constant pivoting, analyzing, and I think our lives, no matter what you do, it's the same concept. You need to have a strategy, you need to have a plan. That's how I lost weight. That's how I became a public speaker. That's how I became a career strategist. That's how I became a writer. Everything was a strategy. Nothing was ad hoc, folks. Yes. When I post things on social media, that I'm giving packs and stuff, then

people even come to me and say, "Wow, how do I become like you?" We were just talking about this at the beginning, as well, Tiffany, where it takes 15 years for me to be an overnight success.

The point is, yeah, everything is a strategy. You really need to have a strategy. Without a strategy, all that effort is wasted. Instead, if you focus more on things based on a structure plan, then you have higher probability to reap the results and have success.

[00:23:51] TF: Actually, that brings me to a great segue, because now, it's the end of September and for those job seekers hoping to find a new role by the end of the year, how can they set themselves up for success for the next 30 or 60 days and avoid getting caught in the holiday slowdown?

[00:24:09] RS: That's a really great question. Because a lot of people have this common misconception that since it's the holiday season, they think companies are not hiring. Apparently, they magically disappear. I don't know what they're thinking. Also, they think, you know what? We'll wait until January 1st to kick things off. That's the number one mistake people make. This is the reason why. Companies are trying to fill up their positions before they close the financial budget. So, at least until Thanksgiving, at least. Thanksgiving, and maybe a week in December, they're still hiring. They want to fill up the vacant position so that from January 1st, they're starting with a new process, new budget.

So, this is a really good chance for get those job openings. For example, my last four jobs, I got hired in November and December. I'm not even kidding. Take that misconception out that people stop hiring during the holidays. That being said, if you want to get a job within the next 30, 60 days, you have to desktop those resumes, which you have, which you use 10 years ago, and you have to actually refresh that resume with the right keywords.

What do I mean by that? For every job you want to apply for, you need to make sure you use the right keywords, because recruiters use AI based software and what they do is say they're looking for a software developer or sales consultant. They put different keywords in the software, like collaboration, team player, Java, programming, agile, all the keywords associated with the job. And then, the software starts screening through different resumes and look for those keywords. If you have those keywords, you are going to come up in their search compared to other people who didn't use those keywords.

[00:26:00] TF: Well, what's crazy to me is you could be a project manager, but if you have project management and not project manager on it. I mean, these things are so crazy sensitive. Also, dates are the

biggest thing for my clients. They will not put the months all the time on their resumes and that is huge points off.

[00:26:19] RS: Oh, 100%. Yeah. So, you need to have resumes with the right keywords based on the job you want to apply for. Again, resumes are not thesis. A resume is not a thesis, which means that you don't need a 20-page resume. A resume should be within one and a half to two-page max. We are living in the world of Instagram where people literally have only 30 seconds. Recruiters have to go through hundreds of resumes, and they have only 30 seconds timespan where they skim through stuff. So, make your resumes between a page and a half, couple of pages max, so that people can easily go through it. That's number one.

Number two is go update your LinkedIn profile. Because LinkedIn is one of the most underrated and high-performance social media platforms for professionals. Because everything you put on LinkedIn, your about page and experience section, everything is indexed by Google and is rich SEO information, which is search engine optimization. So again, a recruiter search for, say, software developer, and when you put the right keywords on LinkedIn, the software with the recruiters use, they screen through the LinkedIn profile. If you have those keywords, then you are going to stand out from people. You are going to show up in the top 10 results of Google, that's why you really need to update your LinkedIn profile.

We covered number one and number two. Number three would be is, you have to subscribe for a job alert. So, people usually get overwhelmed, because there's so many different job websites. And every day they have to go through this job website with job title in the search bar, click on Enter, they see hundreds of listings. They click on each one, and then they apply to it. It can get cumbersome. But what if you take a proactive approach to it?

So, what I mean is go one step further where you have all these results, but then save the search and subscribe for a job alert where for the name – if you search for software developer, and you got search results, you have options in the job websites where you could say save job alert. And when you do that, what's going to happen to every day, you're going to get all job listings for that particular job name, right in your email inbox. So, you don't have to go through every job website and search every day. Instead, everything is coming through your inbox. And now you're taking a proactive approach, you just literally have to open your inbox for seeing all the search results. Instead of viewing them manually, having to go through these different job websites.

[00:28:59] TF: I love it. In fact, it's funny, I always liken it to, for my clients, it's like go fishing once and then have the fish come to you. What's great is with LinkedIn, you can have 10 different search alerts. You could do one a little more general, then you could have some specific ones. If say you have different verticals that you're applying for, so it really makes it easy.

Also, in the show notes, I'm going to put a link to the job site, jobscan.co. It's jobscan.co, not com, and that emulates those applicant tracking systems. If you go on, you can get a few free scans, and then paste the job description, paste the resume, and it'll show you the keywords that you need. Don't be freaked out if it says like you're a 20% match in the beginning, because even though you're trying to get up to an 80%, I have taken so many client resumes from that 20% to 80%. It's just knowing which words to do. But I'll let you – I digress.

[00:29:55] RS: That's great, jobscan.co. Yeah, I've used that as well. I definitely recommend hat as well. And then the next thing is you have to build your network. So, using LinkedIn first, you want to make sure you start posting things related to your work, engage with other people's post, then make it a point to connect with at least five new people every week. Because just by connecting with new people, you're going to see different opportunities. In fact, my last four jobs were from LinkedIn. It's been nine years since I actually applied for a job with the resume. That is the power of LinkedIn engagement and connecting with other people. That is one thing.

On the same note, product and meetups and conferences, because you'll never know who you're going to meet from the ideal company you want to work for. Say, for example, you may meet software developer at Google at a meetup. And then if you want to join Google, you can talk to that person, and then you can ask him or her to refer you because if you have a referral, you have a higher chance of getting an interview call, then just blindly applying for that particular job.

See how just by networking, you're increasing your chances of getting that job. That is the fourth thing. Three more important things and these are really good things to remember, that's why I'm going detailed into each one of them.

The next thing you want to remember, is definitely to set some time for applying for jobs. People are going to get really overwhelmed, because they don't know how many jobs to apply for per week. And then they randomly keep applying for jobs during different times of the day. It's very stressful. Instead, have a goal. Say, you want to apply for 50 jobs per week. And yes, that's a normal number of applications you need to keep doing folks.

So, 50 jobs per week. Now, divide that per day, within the five days, Monday to Friday. That means 10 jobs per day. Have like a two-hour or three-hour block of time, every day, usually the same time and start applying for these 10 jobs every day. See how you took a big task of 50 jobs per week, and now you're dividing it into 10 jobs per day, and then you're doing it within the two to three-hour time frame every day at the same time. Because once you keep doing that, you start getting used to it. It becomes a habit. You can start cracking it, now that you have structure. Not a lot of people do that. But definitely start blocking time for your job application process and also have a set goal.

[00:32:31] TF: That is such great advice. I think one thing that many of my clients I've talked to them about is they get stuck because it takes so much longer in the very beginning when you're doing those first few. The resume for – say you have three different areas. You're looking at project management, maybe you're looking at some communications jobs, or customer success. And so that first cover letter takes a little bit, like forever in a day, it feels like. But once you get past that, it gets so much easier to start tailoring that.

So, what may take you hours that first week, then by the time you're in week three, Raj, don't you think it's going to be much more efficient?

[00:33:07] RS: Oh, exactly. You can go one step further where you can maintain a Google Doc of the different answers you've been giving for different application forms, and you can reuse the same answers. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, right? I believe in doing the least amount of work to get the maximum results. That being said, use a Google Doc, ask them when you're feeling different application forms, where they may ask questions like, "Why do you want to work for a company? What makes you attracted to a company? Why are you interested in our company? How do you think your skill set can match this job description?" You are going to have some questions like that. A lot of companies ask the same exact questions again and again.

You don't have to keep thinking about coming up with an answer for that. Instead, if you already answered a similar question, put that in a Google Doc. And then when you have another application form, asking the same questions, literally copy it from there, and then paste it. See, how you are optimizing your process and then saving time. So, that is something. And the last two things, which I wanted to quickly mention was, you definitely want to track your job application process, which we already talked about with the Excel sheet. And then finally, continuous learning is going to be really, really important. Because this is the thing, folks, thousands of people are probably applying for the same job you're applying for. They pretty much have the same kind of skill set.

So, what is going to make you different from other people? Or you already have a job, and there are five people up for promotions, but there's only one promotion they could give, what will make them promote you compared to other people? That's where these extra courses, the extra things you do is going to add value to you. Say, you are a software developer and again, folks, I'm using the example of software developer just as an example. The same things apply for a nursing student or a salesperson or whatever job you are at, what you want. But I'm just using software developers an example plus, I'm a tech guy. So, that's why I'm doing this.

But the point is, if it's a software developer position, and you have taken in courses in communication, listening, leadership, which isn't directly related to programming, but it's going to add to your skill set. Then that is what is going to stand out from other people and it's going to make the people's decisions easier to promote you or hire you compared to other people. So, continuous learning through – you have websites like Code Academy, Khan Academy, Udemy, Coursera. Go there, take courses. Most of them are free, and then add that to your LinkedIn profile. These are the seven things you could actually do right now, to increase your chances of getting a job within the next 30, 60 days. These are tried and proven techniques, which works. The thing is, you just have implement it.

[00:35:54] TF: Well, that's such great advice, Raj and I really like that. Now, to take the LinkedIn part that you mentioned a step further, what are your main tips for making sure your LinkedIn profile is up to par? Since this is where recruiters and HR departments will spend the most time looking. Now, you already mentioned the keywords. Any other things for optimizing their profiles?

[00:36:16] RS: Yeah. So, I would say, first, let's do a comparison so that the young listeners will relate to this as well. So, you're scrolling through Instagram, you keep scrolling, scrolling, scrolling, that's what everyone does. Then all of a sudden you pass at something. That's because you find the picture interesting, or they have something creative, which is grabbing your attention.

Now, let's take LinkedIn. LinkedIn works the same way. People are looking at so many different LinkedIn profiles, they keep scrolling, scrolling, scrolling, but all of a sudden, they look at your LinkedIn profile and the reason they are looking at your LinkedIn profile is because you are going to have something different, something eye catchy, which makes people look at your profile, right? So, it's very similar.

That being said, some key two, three things quickly you could do. First thing is, have a catchy tagline. So, say, for example, going into the software developer title, interesting software developer. Millions of people have the

exact same title, software developer, right? Instead, what if you say something like, say, building software to help solve customer problems, one code at a time or something like that?

So, if you have a catchy tagline like that, or squashing customer bugs through coding. If you have a tagline like that, then people immediately will look at it. Because say, you have 100 software developer taglines, then all of a sudden you have this tagline, they are going to look at it. So have a catchy tagline.

The next thing is your about page. Your about page is so important, folks. It's like your elevator pitch. It's like you're telling me about yourself. So within two minutes, you have to let people know why you're the right person for the job and provide your value and skill set. So that's where your about comes into picture. Your about Section usually should be any two paragraphs. It should talk about what are your skill sets, how you can add value to the company, and then what are you interested in?

So, if you concentrate on those three aspects in those two paragraphs, then people immediately can understand, "Oh, okay. You have eight plus years' experience doing this. Oh, you're interested in leadership and management. Oh, you've also had the certifications." So, it's just two paragraphs, which highlights the important things about you. Think of it like a movie reel. So, if the next Batman movie comes up, they have this 32-second trailer, which makes you interested in it. Similarly, your about page and your tagline is what is going to make people interested in you.

Those two are the main things. But apart from it, of course you want, as we said, put the right keywords, populate as much information as possible in other sections, like experience section, certifications, accomplishments. Populate every section with the right keywords and things you want to highlight, because again, software screens through LinkedIn profiles, and it's really important to do that. But start with the tagline and the about section. I think that will really, really help you to stand out.

Also, of course, have a professional picture. This is not Facebook. You don't want a picture with your dog or your drinking at a bar. Instead, just pick a decent picture of yourself and I think that would be a good start for people.

[00:39:41] TF: What I love about the tagline thing, well a few things. First of all, I always talked about, with my clients, it's like now your own marketing manager and you are the product. So, with a tagline, with the advice that you're saying, you are giving people a visual of you know this person in action, solving problems, adding value. That's what's so important off the bat. Because we think about what makes – it's almost consumer

psychology, you're thinking about what makes people want to buy products. Well, what inspires confidence in recruiters and what you can deliver.

[00:40:14] RS: Right. Exactly, exactly. I think we're living in the world, where you really have to differentiate yourself from other people and you have to find those opportunities to do that. The tagline is one of those opportunities, for sure.

[00:40:30] TF: Raj, you talk about your journey to public speaking, and tell the story of taking a leap of faith and investing in yourself back in 2011. Specifically, taking $3,000 to go to a software conference, even those naysayers thought you were crazy for using your own money. How did you overcome your own doubts, and those of others to take that strategic risk that planted the seed for your public speaking career?

[00:40:54] RS: Yeah, this is a good continuation to that story, where I was describing how we came to the United States and apply for 1,293 jobs. So, once I got the job, I started, continued to work on the different fears, which I had originally mapped out to conquer when I was 19. One of those fears was public speaking. Literally, once in two days, I used to have to start going through my mind that, "Man, I'm so afraid to speak." I cannot convey my points articulately. Or in meetings, I'd be really hesitant to ask questions, because I was afraid to speak up. That haunted me until 2011.

And then one day, I saw this email, that said, "Software Conference in Seattle, you should come." I've got millions of emails like this beforehand, like before this email, and I always used to delete it. But this time around, I didn't delete it. I just kept looking at it for four or five minutes, because it was like speaking to me. Here I was, all this while, being traumatized about public speaking. And then here, I get an email saying, "Come to this conference." If this was a Hollywood movie, it'll be like a person in the video calling me, "Come to me", kind of deal.

I decided, you know what, all the while I've been thinking about getting rid of the fear of public speaking, what better way than actually going to a conference, and then see how people speak. So, in 2011, I pretty much didn't have any money. I swiped my credit card for $3,000 knowing that –

[00:42:40] TF: That was tough.

[00:42:40] RS: – knowing that I still didn't have money. But as I was saying, before, you have to get uncomfortable to get comfortable. You need to push yourself out of your comfort zone to find new

opportunities. That's what I did, at that point of time. So, I go to this conference, and then I started networking with people. I felt safer because I didn't have this fear of being judged, because no one knows me in Seattle. At that point, I was in Cleveland, Ohio. I started seeing the speakers giving talks. There were some good speakers and there were also not so good speakers. And luckily, I went to the sessions of those not so good speakers, because I had this epiphany that what better way to overcome your fear of public speaking, than actually becoming a speaker, right? So that's probably the best way to overcome it. I got this epiphany when I was seeing one of the, not so good sessions, because it gave me confidence that okay, anyone can speak now.

The next thing I did was I started networking with all the speakers after the conference, took copious amount of notes about different things they did, how they write proposals, how they come up with talks, blah, blah, blah. And then, in 2012, I started speaking in small, small meetup groups because I felt much safer. And then in 2013, after seven months and 23 trial runs, I got my first conference talk, and it was a huge hit. People started talking about this funny Indian dude who is actually talking about tech stuff, and he was making people laugh. The word started spreading. One thing led to another. Here we are in 2021, I have been given a TEDx back. I'm giving a next one shortly, and I've spoken at over 100 plus conferences.

All of this happened because I made that one decision to swipe the $3,000 of my own credit card and push myself out of my comfort zone. This doesn't mean that I'm telling people to immediately swipe $3,000 right now. What I'm trying to say is you need to start pushing yourself slowly out of your comfort zone. If you want to become good at public speaking, you can go to Toastmasters. You could take online courses and speaking. You could go to meetup groups. You could start speaking meetup groups. Again, start small, start simple.

Take the smallest step possible to make progress towards your goals. That's what it's all about. See, every example I'm giving you goes back to the first thing which I was mentioning, which is mindset, consistency, doing the work and pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. Those are the four keys to do whatever changes you want to do in life. But yeah, that's pretty much the story of how I became a public speaker. Now, people who grew up with me are shocked and astonished because they see me giving interviews for CBS, Fox, and I'm live. They say, "How did you even make this transformation?" Again, I tell them the same thing., it took me 15 years, but I'm here.

[00:45:44] TF: Well, such an incredible story. I love how you invested in yourself, you took chances, and you just kept trying and iterating and learning and meeting people. What is the secret to your networking? Because a lot of people, again, if only your 19-year-old self could see you now, but what some advice you give to those

people who are shy networkers? Like the thought of going to a big conference may be so terrifying for some people. So, what are things they can do?

[00:46:12] RS: That's a great question. I should have shared this in my book as well. But this is not in the book. So, you're going to get an inside scoop of different things you could do in this podcast.

[00:46:21] TF: Thank you.

[00:46:22] RS: So, this is how I have over 4,000 connections, at least on LinkedIn, and I have pretty much a lot of people I know in every industry in the United States and outside the United States. In a group, there have been attendees, actually registered for the event, their names are shown, the list of attendees. Now, what you are going to do is take each person's name and plug that on LinkedIn. Put that on the search bar, you're going to get their whole profile. Then you can figure out okay, what do they do? Which company do they work for? Are they in the ideal job that you want to be at? Even before attending your meetup groups, you can send a message via meetup saying, "Hey, I just saw that you're attending this meetup event and I saw your LinkedIn profile and you're working at Google. I'm really excited to meet you" See how I'm already started to establish that connection with him or even before the meetup group.

And then during the meetup group, you get to know the person even further, then ask them about different things about Google. This is just an example of say, "If you want to get to Google." But you get the gist where you network with people and you know, learn. So, continuing with the same example. If that person is Google, then he or she will give you information about it and then that person could refer you ideally, right. And they could be a mentor.

So, that is meetup groups where you can proactively start looking at people who are going to attend the event, and then do research. Because the key is research. You really need to do the research. Then you research the person, then talk about things which they're interested in, then they're more likely to talk to you. The number one mistake people make is, they don't have anything interesting read back about because they haven't also done the research. So, when you start talking to the person, they feel, you're not the right person to talk too, and it's a waste of their times. So, you have to do the research. That's what the meetup.

Similar kind of concept for conferences. Even before I go to conferences, I'll see the list of speakers that are speaking at the event. Then I connect with them on Twitter or LinkedIn, and telling them, "Hey, I see that you're giving the session on how not to be a toxic leader, and that's such a great topic. I haven't had experiences like

that as well and I'm so excited to attend your talk at a conference." Just send that message, 99% of the times will say, "Oh, thank you. I'm looking forward to meeting you as well."

Okay. So, now you established the connection. Now, you go to the conference, attend the talk, make the person see you. And then after the talk, say, "Wow, that was a great talk about toxic leadership. These are the three things was resonated with me. Do you have some more time to talk about this?" See, how you now slowly build the connection? And then after the conference, you continue to be in touch and that's it, they become your friends, and then you grow your network. See, how you're taking a proactive approach of networking, rather than reactive approach.

As you can see, based on me talking about so many different things, I'm a strategy guy. So, I plan everything before I execute. These are the things people can start doing right now. No matter whether they're shy, introverted, or extroverted, whatever be the case, just connecting with them proactively before you attend the event is really going to help to build your network and also have your elevator pitch ready. So, what do we mean by that? It's a two-minute spiel pf what you do, what value you bring to the table, and why people should notice you, right?

For example, I would say, "Hey, my name is Raj Subrameyer. I'm a tech career strategist. I help people specifically in the tech space to find a dream job and become successful leaders in the industry. I've been in the tech space for 15 plus years now and now I help other people become better leaders as well. I also have a book called *Skyrocket Your Career* where I talk about career advancement strategies, but you can always find more information about me and my website, which is rajsubra.com. That being said, I want to notice your career coach as well. And I found it really fascinating. Tell me more about yourself."

See, how literally within a minute I showed my value. I could insert more things in my elevator pitch, saying, "It depends on who you're speaking to." If I'm tracking their career coach, this will be my spiel. If I'm talking to another speaker, I would say, "Hey, my name is Raj Subrameyer and I'm an international keynote speaker. I've spoken at multiple conferences for both private events and conferences. And in fact, I've given two TEDx talks as well. I help other people become better speakers in the industry. You can find more about how I help people on a website, rajsubra.com. By the way, I saw that you were also speaking at this conference in a week. Tell me more about that, because I found that fascinating." See, how I changed the whole narrative based on the person I'm talking about?

So, really need to have two to three versions of it based on who you're meeting. When you go to a conference and meet people, immediately tell them what your value and skill sets are, because they will find it interesting as well, and then it helps to start the conversation. So, that's kind of the summary of how you could actually build your network. It'd be doing research, coming up with different elevator pitches, and trying to keep investing in that relationship, because you never know when your paths come across. It's really good to stick to people who can motivate you, who can be a mentor, and who can be a value to you.

[00:52:16] TF: This is such great advice. I like to – when you're at conferences, and doing all the things that you said, between talking to people, I like to have a few minutes to myself, where I'll go jot down notes from what I just talked about with that person, even just in the corner or whatever. Because that way, as I do my follow up emails with all those people, I mean, of course had to follow up in person, but then I will be able to differentiate my conversations, because otherwise they can all run together.

[00:52:46] RS: Yeah. I do the exact same thing as you. So, I use my Notes app on my iPhone, or you could use Evernote. As I finish talking to a person, immediately, I note some hints about that person saying, "Raj career coach website, connect with him after conference later." So, I'll put bullet points of things about that person so that even after the conference, they remember. Because that's another problem. If you meet like 50 people, if you don't know what they're doing, then you're going to get confused. "Oh, I met with Raj, but I forgot what he was doing. And Raj is here, what do they actually do?" So, you are going to get into the problem.

A couple of ways, you can use the Notes app, or Evernote or ask for a business card. Once a person leaves at the back of the business card, put some hints and then put that in your wallet. That's old school/ I still do it. I'm still an old school guy. But the point is, I do note down a lot of stuff on my Notes app. This is the thing, folks, even before going to the conference, I note down three to four bullet points about each speaker to have icebreaker conversations. That's the amount of research I do.

So, for example, if someone comes back to me, if you say, "Hey, Raj, I saw your latest article on info queue about productivity hacks. And these are the three things that really, really interested me. How do you follow that on a regular basis?" When you say that, I'll immediately be prompted to back to you. Instead, if you just come and say, "Hey, Raj, how are you doing? Can you help me with a job? Because I want to get into Google and you have a big network. Could you help me?" No, I'm not going to help you, because you didn't bother to introduce yourself to me. You haven't taken the pain to research about what I do, and then you're just asking for things instead of having a conversation.

Similar to me, a lot of people are busy in their own ways, and they have to support their own clients and they have their own priorities. Their time is valuable. So, if you are going to consume their time, you better have a good reason why you want to consume. By that, I'm not saying that I won't talk to people, but I'm just saying, see how you can make much more effective connection rather than just blindly going into a conversation. That's what I'm talking about here.

[00:55:05] TF: Well, I always talk to people about thinking of how you would react, using some empathy there. Thinking, if somebody just came up to you and ask you, "Hey, can you give me a job?" And you met two minutes ago, that's going to be very off putting. So, a lot of times with networking, it's just getting these relationships, giving it some time. I mean, some of the people I've met at conferences have later become friends over time, but that build up. Your research, I love that you talk about that, Raj, because it's so important, because people, they want to feel valued, and just you showing that you took the time to want to learn more about them. But yet, you're also making sure it's almost like tennis match quality of going back and forth, where it's not all just you interviewing them. It's discussions.

[00:55:52] RS: You could also think about how you could offer value. So, for example, I'm in the tech career coaching space, and I'm also a speaker. If there's another person, say, for example, like you. Tiffany, has a really great podcast, I had no clue about how to host a podcast show, what are the stuff that goes through it, I've only been a guest, I'm not a producer, right? So, I would say, "Hey, Tiffany, I love the way you do the podcast and stuff. I listen to these episodes." In fact, I think that's how we are so connected, probably. But the point is, I would say, "I listened to this episode, and this is the value I got. Could you tell me more about the podcast?" And then later on, once, after one or two conversations. I would say, "Oh, by the way, if anything, if you're interested now how to become a tech speaker, how to publish a book or something, definitely hit me up. Because I've gone through that process, I'd be more than glad to let you know what I had to go through."

Now, I'm offering value, and you are offering value, and then people grow together. It shouldn't be a one-way communication. It should be a duplex communication. Both should grow together, and the more you help each other, I think the stronger the bond becomes, and this is how I approach networking. I don't usually – if I'm going to network with people, that means that they have something in terms of – they're in the same frequency or the same wavelength as me, in the sense they believe in something, which I am passionate about as well, right? Or they have so much stuff about something which I want to learn, and I also try to figure out voluntarily tell them, "Hey, by the way, I know you're talking about these two things, but I already have experience. So, if you want any help, just hit me up whenever." When you do that, I think the bond strengthens, and then both of

the person in the exchange start helping each other out continuously, and they'll connect you with each other's network. And then again, yeah, it's a whole – it's a cycle.

[00:57:59] TF: The sky's the limit, really. That's really exciting. Because when you reached out, I was so happy and seeing all that you're doing, and just knowing how we can help each other because we both are committed to helping people find their dream jobs, and really explore the possibilities.

Speaking of that, I just have to ask again, since you talked a little bit about this, how you have just achieved so many major goals. You told us about the international speaker, and writing a bestselling book, but you also mentioned that you lost 50 pounds. So how did you approach that goal? Because I know a lot of people want to know about that, as well.

[00:58:42] RS: I think this is a good, good time to talk about how we achieve any goals in life. Because in the past five years, I have accomplished about 90% of my goals. The reason I have a good track record is again, I have a clear strategy. So first, I started with the vision. The vision is what do you want to look like in the future? What do you want to be in the future? Then, you have the goals to reach that vision. So, what are the different goals which I need to accomplish to reach that vision?

Let's make it much more understandable for your listeners. One of my vision four years ago was to be a TED speaker, okay. The vision was to be a TED speaker and impact people on a larger scale. Now, that's the vision. So, what are the goals to reset vision? Some of the goals were start looking at TED Talks, and then they got TED speaking course, then start giving keynote because it's larger audience, and start reading books, start reading books on how to give good speeches. Then I recorded myself in video to see how I speak, what are the different things I could do.

Those are examples for goals or different things I want to do. Then what are the tasks you want to do to reach those goals? So, say for example, I want to listen to different TED talks, right? That means, now, one of the tasks, you have to start blocking time for that. How many TED Talks do you want to see per week? Three? Four? Hundred? Two-hundred? For me, it was like three TED Talks per week.

Okay. So, I have Monday to Friday. How am I going to space that out? So, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Okay, let's just place that like one talk for three days. One talk every three days. What time I'm going to check out the talk? It'll always be the same time every day, because your mind gets to doing the same thing over and over again, it becomes a habit. So now, I mapped out the task. And then I go further and put those tasks to my

Google Calendar. It'll literally tell me what to do each day on my Google Calendar. If Google Calendar goes down, I'm I'm done. So, my life runs on Google Calendar.

So, there'll be a time block already there saying, "Go through this TED Talk." I usually take the weekends. I spent about 15 to 20 minutes to plan the next week's agenda. I already put time blocks. I call it time blocks, they have like one-hour blocks, which I put for different tasks I want to accomplish. I came up with this idea based on reading books, from Cal Newport called *Deep Work*. Carl Jung's books about also doing more cognitively demanding tasks, and how to successfully do it.

But *Deep Work*, definitely, I recommend that book for your listeners by Cal Newport. It talks about how to do cognitively demanding tasks within certain time blocks. So, that's what I do, pretty much. Once you have the vision, you have the goals, you have the task, you map that task to your Google Calendar, and that's when things start to happen. This I started four years ago. Now, in 2021, I already gave my first TEDx Talk. And then, by the time this podcast releases, I would have already given my second TEDx Talk. That goal was four years of planning. I took a six-month intensive TED speaking course, on how to talk like a TED speaker. So, everything was part of a plan. Nothing was ad hoc.

[01:02:26] TF: Well, thank you, Raj. This has been so much fun, just learning about your journey, and all of the amazing things you're doing to help people. Thanks for taking time from your really busy schedule and I can't wait to hear that TED Talk.

[01:02:41] RS: Thank you so much for having me. I want to acknowledge you for showing up and trying to offer value to people, to impact their lives and careers as well. I know there's a lot of work which goes into getting good episodes out, and a lot of production work. So, I appreciate you doing that. I also appreciate you having me. It was such a pleasure talking to you and hearing some insight from you as well.

[01:03:06] TF: Well thank you so much and look forward to this and just let me know what other ways we can ever work together.

[01:03:13] RS: Sounds good. Thank you so much.

[01:03:14] TF: Thanks so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[01:03:16] TF: Thank you for joining Job Search Strategies with Tiffany Franklin. I appreciate your time and hope you will check out my website, tjfcareercoach.com to see show notes for this Episode 19, as well as to book your complimentary 20-min session with me to see ways to accelerate your career search.

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