

Ep #7: Confirmation Bias



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Welcome to the *Get a Better Job in 30 Days* podcast. This is episode 7: Confirmation Bias.

Welcome to the *Get a Better Job in 30 Days* podcast. I'm your host Natalie Fisher. I'm a certified career mindset coach who also happens to love dogs, lattes, and most importantly skipping the small talk and getting right to the conversations that matter. On this podcast, I will coach you on how to use your brain to build a wildly successful career and make a real impact in your industry. If you want to do more than just work for a living, you've got to start by making the right decisions now. Are you ready? Let's go.

Hello. So today I'm going to talk about a concept that comes up a lot called confirmation bias. So the problem that I normally get presented with in my client coaching sessions is that it's not working, whatever it is that the client is trying to achieve.

So let's use the example of trying to get interviews for the job they would like to ideally have, so ideal dream job, ideal dream role and they're coming to me saying, "It's not working." And they're normally doing a lot of actions and I can clearly see that they are trying and that they have reached out to a lot of people, and that they have maybe even had some interviews. I'll get into that. But normally they start out by saying, "It's not working." And their predominant thought, their predominant narrative is it's not working.

And so the concept of confirmation bias states that when you believe something as fact, then you look for evidence everywhere that that fact is correct. So when you say, "It's not working," you are going to find all the evidence that it's not working. You'll see that 10 people didn't respond to you. And you'll discount that one person who did, but maybe that conversation never ended up happening, but you'll discount the fact that somebody did respond to you.

Or you will discount the fact that maybe you had a conversation with a friend who referred you to somebody else to speak to who then you did

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have a conversation with. But then you'll say, "But that doesn't really count because that was someone I already knew, so that doesn't count."

Or you'll just look for the evidence of it not working and you'll be able to find it very, very easily. And you'll be very, very good at building up the case for it's not working because that is your predominant narrative, your predominant thought, your predominant story in your head is it's not working, and so that happens a lot.

And I've been through that whole thing too where I feel like I'm banging my head against a wall and taking all the actions. And I would be like, "Look, I'm doing all of it." And I would list out all the things I was doing, and I would have a sheet showing, almost like I really wanted to prove that I was doing everything, but that it wasn't working. So that was me seeing all the evidence of it not working as well.

So the thing that we need to do to solve this is to realize, first have an awareness of it, be like, okay, repeating in my head it's not working and repeating that with more and more conviction, and wanting to prove I'm doing everything but it still doesn't work. That pattern leads us nowhere, and we can see that, because I'll ask you, "How has that been working for you so far?" It hasn't, it doesn't work to repeat, it's not working.

And so what's happening there is your brain is focused on what's not working, and it has found all the evidence to prove it, and that's called confirmation bias, where you want to confirm that you are right, because our brains love to be right. So of course we're going to find all the evidence, we're going to build a really strong case for it.

So the first step is realizing, recognizing that you're doing that and being really honest with yourself. And okay, I keep saying this is not working, maybe I could be wrong. Where could I be wrong? Where could it be working? Where could something be working anywhere? So first you've got

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to realize that you're doing it and then you've got to be open to the fact that that's not working for you.

So what do you gain by continuing to believe that it's not working, nothing's working etc? Where do you go from there? And if that's really true, if you're right, if you are right, if you're ultimately like, okay, nothing works, it's not working, where does that really leave you? Let's be honest, where do you go from there? That literally means you are screwed. So your confirmation bias proves you right but where does it leave you? And there's nowhere to go from there.

So that's the first thing, is recognizing that you're doing it, being honest with the fact that you're doing it. Realizing that the pattern gets you nowhere, and realizing that you're in a habit of looking for what's not working. So, yes, you're going to be really, really good at it, you're going to be really, really good at finding what's not working, so having that self-awareness.

And then you want to open up your mind a bit, be like, okay, that's not working, I need to start thinking a bit differently. What could be working? So if you had to come up with one or two things that were working for you right now, no matter how small, if I literally had a gun to your head and I said, "You've got to come up with at least two things that are working," what would you come up with?

So for my clients, they normally have a ton of things that are actually working, but they're not used to seeing them. And this is what happens when we're in confirmation bias. We don't have access to that part of our brain that actually shows us what is working. And successful people have to start with what is working, because if you're constantly arguing for nothing working then that's what you'll constantly get. So you have to start with something that's working, there's no other way.

So a lot of the times my clients will either be in the situation where they are not getting responses, or they're not getting interviews, or they're not

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getting offers. So they're either not getting opportunities, they're not getting interviews or they're not getting offers. So when they're in a situation like that and they're thinking it's not working, it's not working, there are going to be things that are working.

So for example, you've taken action, so you've sent out a bunch of emails, or requests, or connects with people on LinkedIn, that's something that's worked, you've gotten yourself to take that action. And you haven't received your desired result yet. But you know now that those messages that you sent to those people were not working. So you didn't get the desired response that you wanted. So then you need to get curious, instead of getting frustrated and even saying, "It's not working, it's not working," you need to get curious and say, "Why didn't it work?"

And a lot of the times I'll ask what numbers or how many requests they've sent out and they have only sent out three requests, and they haven't gotten a response. Or sometimes they have gotten responses but they haven't actually counted those as real responses because they're like, "That didn't count because it was somebody that I knew from before." Or, "That didn't count because that was my friend." And of course it counts, all if it counts. You established a relationship previously that led you to someone helping you.

Or you got in contact with somebody and maybe have responded to you a week later. So my clients might say, "Oh yeah, but that took way too long." Or, "It wasn't the response that I wanted or it was a rejection." You got a response. Or they're getting interviews but they're not closing the interviews and they're saying, "It's not working, it's not working, it's not working." But they missed the whole point that they are getting the interview in the first place. So the fact that they got an interview means that their résumé is working.

So if you're getting an interview that means that they saw your résumé and they said, "This person looks like they could help us out, they're definitely

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worth the time to talk to, let's invite them for an interview." That's a big deal, that's an opportunity. And most people don't see that as something that worked. They just immediately go to, "Yeah, but I didn't get the job so it doesn't work. It's not working."

So, let's shift it's not working to your thought process isn't working. So we can always say, "It doesn't work." When we say that we're blaming a process, we're saying, "Sending emails to people to reach out to them to start a conversation doesn't work." Or we're saying, "Going for interviews doesn't work, because I can't close them." But it's not those things that are not working. It's your way of thinking about those things that are not working. And as long as you stay in it and you get really curious as to why it's not working, you will make progress, you will make significant progress.

And the reason why most people will stop, take a break or not end up going through the process enough times to actually succeed is because of that thought, it's not working, it doesn't work, this doesn't work for me. And so that's the sentence, those are the sentences that will only lead you to quitting. And it is very difficult for my clients in the beginning to come up with what's working and that's why it's so important that you push yourself and challenge yourself to come up with things that are working.

And like I said, if I literally held a gun to your head and I said, "Look, you have to come up with some things that are working," you would be able to do that, we always can. So we have to start from what is working and go from there and build upon that. And yes, we're going to have things that don't work along the way, and that's totally part of the journey.

So when you look back and you're already doing your job, say you go to the future and you see yourself, you're doing your ideal job at your ideal pay. And you look back, it's going to be a bunch of conversations that you had, a bunch of reach-outs and emails and things that you sent out that didn't work. But then there's going to be the ones that did.

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And you can't get yourself to take that action and do the things that are going to work when you're in the mind frame of it's not working, it's not working. You can't get to that place, you can't access that part of your brain that is creative, and resourceful, and curious, and can 100% figure out what it is that's going to work. You can't access it because you're too stuck in it's not working. And of course you want to be right about that, so you're going to prove yourself right. But you can just as easily prove to yourself that it is working, and how much more useful is that?

So how would you wake up differently in the morning? And what action would you take differently if you were like it is working, it's working? I got a response here, I got an interview here, I got a comment here. I took this action here. Now I know this doesn't work. I wonder why this didn't work. Let's try this. If you were in that curious energy of it's already done, I know it's happening, I just need to take the steps to it.

So it's like your ideal role at your ideal pay is at the top of the mountain and you need to take the steps to get there. It's going to be a lot more difficult for you to take effective steps to get there when you're essentially walking on the spot saying, "It's not working, it's not working, it's not working," stomping down with more frustration, which is what we do. This is what we do. And then we're like, "But it's not working." And it's like, well, no, of course it's not because you're not actually moving.

And quite often we're doing the same things over and over again, saying, "It's not working," and that perpetuates the frustration. So your brain is infinitely creative. And I can prove this to you. I prove it to my clients every day.

For example, if your boss gave you a task and said, "Okay, you've got to get this done," and you'd never done it before, maybe you didn't know how to do it. You would figure that out. So, so many of my clients have done so many amazing things. And they've figured them out and they've walked through the challenges, they have taken massive action. Massive action

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being one thing didn't work, they tried something else, one thing didn't work they tried something else.

They have done all this for their boss, for a different situation; in another situation in their life they have done that. Maybe it was training for a marathon, or a bike ride, or a triathlon or something like that. They didn't get to their goal immediately, they trained, they tried, they got creative, they figured it out. They knew they were going to do it.

But when it comes to something like getting your dream job, we give up very, very easily, because we think it's out of our control. But it's not, it's a 100% within your control. And so that's what I want to offer you today is start with what's working for you. And if you can't think of anything, think harder and think again and keep thinking of what's working until you come up with something. And then you train yourself to keep coming up with things that are working and then you use those things that are working to fuel you forward.

And you understand deeply that the only way you're going to succeed and get to where you want to go is by starting with what is working, because successful people, they all go through a whole bunch of things that don't work. There's no way to get to your goal if it's a significant goal, there's no way to get there by not doing a few things that aren't going to work. But that doesn't mean you're not going to get there. That doesn't mean that nothing works, it just means that your thought process isn't working.

And I'm going to guess that it's probably because your pervasive stories and your pervasive narrative and your dominant thoughts around what you're trying to achieve are it's not working, it's not working, nothing works, I have done all this action, it doesn't work. And so I was definitely stuck there for a really long time and it just cuts off your creativity, it cuts off access to anything that does work.

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And so that's what confirmation bias is. You can use it for good and you can use it for evil. So if you've been using your confirmation bias to prove to yourself that nothing works, I am sure you have been very successful at that. So let's flip it on its head and let's use our confirmation bias to stretch our minds and figure out what is working. What little glimmers of things that you've done, or that you've seen other people do, or that you know can work, what other evidence in the world can you see?

So, for example, you can start to see a lot of other people getting jobs through networking, a lot of statistics that show that that works. Friends that you know probably have gotten jobs through networking. Maybe they're less smart than you are. Maybe they're less qualified. Looking for that evidence, because it's there, so what doesn't work is always available to you, but so is what does work. So that's up to you to look for what does work.

And I guarantee you, my friend, that there are lots of things that are working now. And when we can build on that, we get to actually keep walking to the top where our ideal role at our ideal pay exists. So, confirmation bias, when you believe something to be true you're going to find evidence to support the fact that it is true. And so if you don't realize that and you stay there, it'll always be true. And it'll be like you're reporting the news, it's just not working, it just doesn't work, I just can't do it.

Or you'll put it in someone else's hands, like they didn't give me the raise, or they didn't hire me, or my boss won't listen to me, or I can't get to where I want to go because, and then you'll have a bunch of reasons like I don't have the certifications, I don't have the experience. Or you'll use something somebody said to you as evidence against you saying, "This person told me that I don't have the experience or that I won't be able to do it."

All of these things will build a really, really strong case for you to not be able to do it. And you'll think you're reporting the news to me, but there is a case that is equally strong or stronger for the fact that you can, there are

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things that are working now, and then it's a 100% available to you to be able to do it too. But you won't see that, because you'll be so stuck in the story of it's not working.

So the reason why I can talk about this so carefully is because I was there too. So if you're doing that, that's what you need to do is just recognizing it, that's the most important thing. And it might be a tough pill to swallow for some of you, you'll be like, "Well, it isn't working." But I guess the only thing I can offer you there is, well, if you believe that fully then you can keep believing that. You can keep saying, "It's not working, it's not working." You can keep stomping your feet down deeper and deeper into the mud saying, "It's not working." And I can't stop you from doing that.

But eventually you're just digging yourself further down because the more you practice that belief the more it becomes true. So you've got to get out of the mud, you've got to stop stomping in one spot so that you can actually start walking up that mountain and get where you want to go.

And the way that you do that is by becoming aware of your confirmation bias, becoming aware that you're doing that and being like, "Okay, maybe I could be wrong about this, maybe this doesn't serve me in any way. Maybe there's no upside to continuing to believe that nothing works. Maybe I'm just feeling sorry for myself, maybe I am capable of a lot more."

And so that's going to require a lot more of you, it's going to require you to stretch your brain to find what is working. And like I said in the beginning, you're really not going to want to, and you're going to think that nothing is. But I guarantee you; you will be able to find some things.

So daily practice what's working, what's working today, what worked today, just like I teach you when you go for an interview and you're going to evaluate that. You always start with what worked, because if you start with what didn't work, your brain will go super far down that spiral of what didn't

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work, and then it'll be a lot harder for you to come up with what did work. So that's why we always start with what worked.

And so if I'm coaching somebody, and they come to the call, they tell me all the things that didn't work. And they say, "Well, I haven't hit my goal yet, I haven't gotten these interviews yet." I'm going to be like, "Why would you say that? What are you doing that has worked to get you these interviews? How is it true that you will get them? How are you working towards getting them?" That's all I care about. I don't need to hear, "It's not working. That didn't work." It doesn't matter because you're continuing on the path.

So there you have it my friends, use confirmation bias for good instead of evil. And remember, what's not working is always available, but so is what is working. It's your job to build a case for what is working and go from there, because it's going to make you feel so much more empowered to be able to actually get to where you want to go. And it's actually the only way to get there, or you can keep your story of nothing works, nothing works for me and stomp your feet into the ground deeper.

Now, no judgment, because I have been there, but now I'm here to drag you out of the mud and say, "Come on, doesn't help, doesn't serve, really there's no point in it."

So, thank you so much for listening to today's episode of Get a Better Job in 30 Days. Please leave me a review, I've been really, really grateful for the reviews that have come in, and they inspire me to keep recording the podcast and continuing to bring great content to you. So please leave me a review, thank you so much, and I will talk to you next week. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of Get a Better Job in 30 Days. If you're ready to dive deeper into your career mindset and start making a serious impact in your industry, join me at nataliefisher.ca/getstarted. I will see you over there.