

## The Top 10 List For Finding a Job in Today's Tough Labor Market

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By now you've heard it all over the news: unemployment is up and the economy is down. Organizations are downsizing, rightsizing or just plain going out of business. Face it – it's a competitive market out there for job seekers. Despite the glum reports, the good news is that there are still plenty of jobs out there for those who are diligent and willing to do their homework. Tough times call for creativity, follow-through and persistence during a job search in a competitive labor market.

Oh, and did I mention patience? That will be key as well. With so many qualified candidates for employers to choose from, jobs are going fast. As a recruiter with over 15 years of experience and a former VP of Human Resources for an MBA School in the Chicagoland area, one of my main functions was to recruit staff members who work at the school. Past searches included a Vice President of Marketing, Vice President of IT, and an Associate Dean. What I have found is that as the labor market and economy shifts, successful candidates are changing their approach to finding a job. Bottom line: *the candidates who get the offer are the ones who stand out above the crowd.*

There are four key phases to a successful job search: Planning, Conducting the Search, Interviewing and Follow-through. Below is my top ten list for finding a job in a competitive labor market with tips on each of the phases. Follow these steps, and you'll be sure to see results.

- 10. Know what you want.** Take the time to figure out what it is you want to do and where you want to work. Think about your strengths, what you have accomplished, and what you enjoy doing. If you are clear on what you want and what you can bring to the table, it will help target your search and make you noticeable to recruiters.
- 9. Do your homework.** Treat your job search like you would a big project: prepare, conduct research, and get informed. It will pay off in the end.
- 8. Get experience.** With many applicants competing for fewer positions, employers are looking for those who have the most relevant experience either in the industry, field or function for the position they are hiring. If you don't have experience in any of those areas, now is the time to acquire some. Get an internship or volunteer – it's never too late.
- 7. Target your search.** Don't waste time sending resumes to hundreds of companies. Focus on a region, industry or company that you have always wanted to work for and tailor your search to what you want. Many candidates are finding lists such as "The 100 Best Companies to Work for" and others helpful in targeting a company they feel would be a good fit for them.

6. **Consider multiple sources.** Of course the Internet is a great place to find out about jobs and companies. Sites such as Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, and Salary.com are popular and very helpful. But consider other sources too such as your college placement or alumni office, newspapers, word of mouth, employment agencies, and professional or social organizations.
5. **Network, network, network.** Networking is all about letting people know what you are looking for and why. It can be as easy as making a few phone calls or sending an e-mail (with your resume of course) to all your friends, relatives, and anyone you know who is working so they can be on the lookout for a potential opportunity for you. Research has shown that networking is the single most successful method for finding a job today.
4. **Spend time on your resume.** A recruiter spends an average of 7 seconds per resume (yes, you read that correctly). Remember that a recruiter can get over 100 resumes in response to an ad or internet posting. That means your resume and cover letter must be concise, impressive, and indicate that you meet the minimum requirements of the position. When a recruiter has to pick from many resumes that are similar, one typo can send your resume into the “not a chance” pile.
3. **Get tips from the insiders.** Before you go on an interview, talk to people who work at the company to learn about the organization, how the recruiting process works, and what to expect. This will help you feel more comfortable, design questions specific to the organization, and give you a leg up on other candidates.
2. **Shine.** When interviewing, be sure to follow the 3 P’s: be Professional, Polished, and Prepared. Do research on the company, prepare questions ahead of time, anticipate questions a recruiter may ask, rehearse your 1-minute story (in response to “Tell me about yourself...”), and dress appropriately. If you have samples of work or school projects relevant to the position, bring them to the interview. These are all things that will differentiate you from the other candidates and will impress the recruiter.
1. **Make a lasting impression.** Never underestimate the power of a thank you note. It doesn’t matter if it is handwritten or e-mailed, just do it and do it fast. Remember, the goal is to stand out above the masses, so be creative. Consider including a current article or book on a topic that was discussed at the interview. When it comes down to two strong candidates, chances are the one who made the lasting impression will get the job.

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