The Family Liaison Office

Family Member Employment

Job Searching in the 21st Century

Has much changed? You bet. The Internet has had a tremendous effect on every aspect of the job search process. The 20th century job search was comprised of six steps. First, you analyzed yourself and your career goals. Next, you explored the career options that matched your self-assessment. Then, you targeted your career search, prepared your job search materials and developed and implemented your job search strategies. And finally, you obtained a position. In the 90s when many companies and whole industries experienced tremendous downsizing, a new aspect of the job search developed: continual development of a career action plan. Although these steps remain constant, the means of attaining them has changed. Each month the resources available to the average Internet user expand dramatically. This is especially true in the area of employment.

Let's begin with the first step in the job search – self-assessment.
Although an abundant amount of career counseling is available online, much of the information presented is inaccurate, incomplete or given by individuals with virtually no experience in career counseling. However, some of the information is very valuable. For instance, it is possible to conduct a complete self-assessment battery online, thereby narrowing your career alternatives to those in which you have the skills, interests, and personality traits.

An excellent site to access for self-assessment tools belongs to Richard Bolle, author of *What Color Is My Parachute?* The address for this site is http://www.jobhuntersbible.com

The next move is researching the career options available.
This step involves your discovering the careers that match your skills, interests, abilities and personality characteristics revealed in your self-assessment. However, this research step requires a great deal more, including information on salary, geographic location, a specific field or industry, or a specific company. The Internet has made all of this information readily available to anyone with the skill to locate it. For instance, the availability of salary information has begun to strip companies of their sovereignty in setting salaries. Candidates can be well aware of the average salary for a specific position and will no longer be at a company's mercy. This general awareness is creating an even wider disparity in salaries offered without regard to longevity, internal equity, or an employee's rank in the hierarchy. There are even Human Auctions conducted online in which candidates sell themselves to the highest bidder. An interesting fact for the reader who is a "Doubting Thomas" is that 65% of online job seekers hail from non-technical professions, so this job search tool is not strictly for "techies."

Once you have researched the various options available to you, it is time to begin the actual job search.
That means accessing job listings. The wealth of such listings is remarkable. However, because of this abundance, one can lose a great deal of time searching sites of little value. Therefore, the wise Internet user can take the advice of the experts like Richard Bolle and Margaret Riley Dikel and begin the search using only their highly recommended sites. These can be found by accessing the Riley Guide at http://www.rileyguide.com or Bolle's site listed above.

It is important to remember that the hidden job market still exists. The majority of positions available are never advertised, and that means the job seeker must still network. However, networking is also changing with the use of the Internet. Now you can create a community of virtual contacts.
For those who feel awkward contacting strangers, the E-networking concept should be less difficult. Generally, more networking will result from this improved comfort level and this creates a greater number of contacts assisting in the job search. To begin E-networking check into professional associations, alumni organizations, message boards, newsgroups, chat rooms, career clubs and other online communities. While listening in on these various E-sources, identify individuals to contact. Develop an e-mail template and personalize it with some brief, but interesting information about you to create a mutual bond. Usually these contacts will provide information on a specific company, industry, objective or even positions.

Before responding to the attractive job listings you must prepare job search materials. The Internet is full of articles by career counselors with specific guidelines on writing resumes, cover letters and developing employment portfolios. There are many resume writing services offered online as well. Again, the amount of information available is often overwhelming and much of it is not accurate. Try to stick to the experts. The previously listed web sites contain links to valuable resume articles and advice.

One caution, the Human Resource departments of many companies "stalk" the Internet searching for job candidates. These Human Resource professionals are listening in on the same associations, message boards, newsgroups, etc., as the job seeker. Today, it is not uncommon for a job seeker to receive e-mail from a company with an interview offer even though the candidate did not personally contact the company. The moral here is that job seekers must be careful what they say in these public forums.

Job seekers must be prepared to forward (or upload directly to a site) resumes and cover letters in whatever style a particular company or organization requires. This includes e-mail attachments, personal websites, electronic-forms, scannable editions and hard copies. Each style requires specific knowledge to insure the edition is legible and user friendly. Again, the experts have scoured the Web and located excellent links. Using their suggestions can save the ob seeker immeasurable time. It is also valuable to remember that with the new means of sending resumes there are new content requirements. During the past 20 years career counselors have emphasized the need for using action verbs to describe accomplishments. With the increased use of electronics, job seekers now must also include nouns. These nouns become the valuable keywords necessary for identifying a worthwhile resume. Only those resumes containing enough of the keywords programmed into the scanning software will be forwarded on to the individual with hiring authority.

It is important to realize there are also negative aspects to the electronic job search. As the number of Internet job seekers increases, certain job trends will grow exponentially. Employers are most concerned with the compulsive job hunting that has already become serious, especially in the technology area. To combat this trend many employers have begun a process called *salvaging*, which refers to the searching of various resume postings to locate current employees who are seeking new positions.

Some companies use salvaging to identify and often terminate employees who are searching without informing their supervisors. Others use the process to pinpoint the dissatisfied employees and then determine whether the company wants to encourage the person to stay by offering an incentive package. In any case, job seekers should be aware of the process.

Career Counselors also warn job seekers not to expect the Internet to replace the human contact part of the job search. Even as an increasing number of employers utilize electronic screening, skill testing at special web sites, Net background checks and video-link interviews, the human contact continues to be a must.

One last concern is the amount of time required to conduct thorough job research. This activity can be quite daunting, even to the savvy Internet user; therefore job searchers need to avail themselves of the experts' and their website choices.

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