

Looking For Work In All the Wrong Places

Q. What's wrong with my job search?

After identifying a potential employer, I get contact information, do my research and send out my resume and cover letter, requesting an interview for a management or human resource position. I am listed with recruiters and staffing agencies and call them every week.

I attend local networking events but end up meeting people who are also unsuccessful job-seekers. And I search the Internet bulletin boards, sending my resume and following up a few days later. Help!!!

Remember the story about the man who was searching for his keys under a bright street light? He explained to a passer-by, "I lost my keys in the parking lot - but it's too dark over there!"

Job-seekers need to leave the brightly illuminated paths and delve into the dark corners where they will find their own keys to success.

First... You need to network before you hit the mailbox. I know - that dreaded "N" word. However, if you're applying for a senior level job, you're often expected to arrive via an introduction.

Second... A vague set of goals will win your resume a one-way ticket to the wastebasket. You need a separate resume and cover letter for each position, carefully targeted to showcase your skills and your unique ability to fill that position.

Third... seasoned professionals often make simple grammar and spelling mistakes because they're operating on overload. A resume is just one more hassle in a crowded day.

Fourth... employers pay online resume services, recruiters and staffing specialists when they need unique, specialized hard-to-find employees. These resources account for only a tiny percentage of placements, even in boom times. Calling once a week may backfire: you come across as needy and pushy. Believe me, their fingers will start punching keys the moment they need you.

Finally... choose a networking group with a leader who knows the score and promises to provide fearless feedback.

You may be reluctant to hire a coach or career counselor because one-to-one guidance doesn't come cheap. But if you keep hitting a wall, your investment may help you save time, money and hassle. And sometimes it's nice to have someone who can hold a flashlight when you're groping around in the dark.

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