



Conducting a Job Search in a Down Economy

By: Linda Matias



Don't believe the hype; just because the economy is weakening and companies are downsizing doesn't mean job opportunities don't exist! Even in a down economy, there are jobs out there. You just have to be more creative in finding the right opportunity. Don't get discouraged by the "war stories" you hear. Realize that it may take longer to find a job than you expected and plan for it.

Develop a job search plan

A full-time job search takes 3-6 months. During that time, you should participate in a number of job search activities including answering classified ads, posting your resume on the Internet, and going on informational interviews. (More on informational interviewing later in the article).

Organizing your job search is key. You will want to map out a strategy, set priorities, and establish goals. Start by targeting specific companies and tailor your resume to reflect your qualifications as they relate to the interests of prospective employers.

Next, establish a realistic job search schedule. Devote 30-40hrs. to your job search if unemployed, and 20-25hrs. if currently employed. Plan and organize your daily activities, and diligently work your plan.

Your job search plan must be flexible. Periodically, revisit your plan and assess your progress, and re-evaluate your goals. Your needs can change and your plan should reflect where you are at the time – not where you have been.

If you embark on the job search, unprepared you will undoubtedly be unhappy with your results.

Start job searching right away

Waiting until your unemployment insurance is about to end before you begin aggressively looking for a position can be a costly mistake. The job market is tight and you need to make use of all the time and resources available. You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you are running out of money and desperation sets in. This is where career mistakes are made and your job search begins to suffer.

Searching for a job can be challenging, and if you passively look for a job the process is going to take much longer than you have hoped. If you only devote 25% of your



time to finding a job, don't expect 100% results. Your job search is only as good as the time you spend to nurture it.

Go on informational interviews

Regardless of the condition of the economy, informational interviewing should be a huge part of your job search campaign. And during a tight job market, informational interviews are especially critical in defining your success.

Why are informational interviews important during at this time? The answer is quite simple. The informational interview is the best source for gathering “insider” information on what is happening within your industry. An informational interview is your opportunity to ask key players and decision makers for advice, guidance, and specific suggestions on how to conduct your job search. Keep in mind that the goal of an informational interview is to gather information – not to ask for a job.

The information you gain will prove to be invaluable. You will discover the realities of your industry and possibly learn about job opportunities.

Avoid toxic job seekers

Job clubs and chat rooms are a great way to generate ideas and to network.

However, they are also a breeding ground for negativity. These support groups can inadvertently affect your job search. Take inventory of the job seekers that attend these meetings. Do they offer words of encouragement? Are they supportive of your efforts, or do they feed into your insecurities?

If after such meetings you feel emotionally drained and start to believe your chances of landing a job are bleak, then it's time to search for a new support team.

One Last Thought

Your job search campaign doesn't have to be a never-ending cycle. If you put in a concerted effort, you will find that your next job is just around the corner.



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Recognized as a career expert, Linda Matias brings a wealth of experience to the career services field. She has been sought out for her knowledge of the employment market, outplacement, job search strategies, interview preparation, and resume writing, quoted a number of times in *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Newsday*, *Newsweek*, and *HR-esource.com*. She is president of CareerStrides and the National Resume Writers' Association.

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