



with
careerbuilder.com

MSN Careers
September 1, 2011

Finding employment before 2012: Job searching as the year winds down

By Beth Braccio Hering, Special to CareerBuilder



Just because the year is winding down doesn't mean your job search should be. The weeks leading up to the calendar turning are full of both challenges and opportunities. Here, experts offer thoughts on making the most of 2011's closing months.

Autumn

"September is typically a great time for job searching as many people are returning from vacation and turning their attention once again towards business," says Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resource Solutions in Northampton, Mass., and author of "Suddenly in Charge: Managing Up, Managing Down, Succeeding All Around."

Duncan Mathison, a career consultant and co-author of "Unlock the Hidden Job Market: 6 Steps to a Successful Job Search When Times are Tough," agrees. "This is a time when many people are back in the office and before holidays begin. It is a great time to kick up the networking to hiring managers and even your direct approach -- letters, emails and calls to people who manage people with your skills."

As fall progresses, companies often start solidifying future plans. "Fourth quarter is budgeting time," Mathison says. "This is when employers are looking at budgets for next year and jobs are being created. Yes, these positions might not start until after the first of the year, but get ahead of the line!" He recommends making sure managers know you and your available skills, which could lead to a job description written to fit your profile or at least a spot in the candidate pool that gets called before an ad gets posted.

Holiday season

Traditional thought is that the holiday season is a bad time to find a job. Some companies do not hire during the last months of the year because they are focused on bringing in revenue and keeping expenses down to achieve their annual financial targets. Companies planning to downsize often do so prior to or just after Thanksgiving, further reducing the available positions during this time period. At companies with vacancies, managers often are using up vacation time -- making it harder to schedule interviews.

Some job seekers view these obstacles as reasons to stop their search during November and December, but openings can arise that have nothing to do with the calendar. If fellow candidates are taking time off, it can be to your advantage. As Matuson notes, "While hiring may be slow during these months, job seekers may find less competition during this period."

Also, some employers are eager to have their staff in place and ready to go when the new year starts. In addition to new spots created by the new budget cycle, internal promotions frequently happen after end-of-the-year performance reviews. Likewise, December is a popular month for retirements. All of these things mean possible opportunities for job seekers, so be ready to present your best.

"This is a good time to update your résumé," says Lisa Quast, author of "Your Career, Your Way!" and president of Career Woman Inc. in Seattle, Wash. "Ensure it clearly lists what you accomplished in each position, preferably quantified. Prepare your list of references, obtain letters of recommendation, research job requirements, analyze the job requirements against your own skills and abilities, research companies and industries, even find and obtain help from 'sponsors' and 'internal coaches' at the companies at which you'd like to apply."

Another plus during the last months of the year: temporary hiring. "The holiday time can actually be helpful to some job seekers because it is when many employers -- especially retail businesses -- hire seasonal, part-time workers," Quast says. "If a full-time position in this area interests you, consider applying for a part-time position during the holidays. Then, show management what an incredibly hard worker you are, your reliability and your positive attitude. It will go a long way in helping you transition from working there part time to full time because most companies find it easier to hire someone they know and like."

And don't forget as you're celebrating the season that holiday gatherings offer chances to meet people who might be of help. "Holidays are a great time to revitalize a lagging search and social network," Mathison says. "Social networks -- friends, community groups, parents of your children's friends -- can restart the search. Many people fail to take advantage of this because most only network with their old professional connections. In tough markets, it is essential that people network with all connections about their search."

Beth Braccio Hering researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues for CareerBuilder. Follow @Careerbuilder on Twitter.

Copyright 2011 CareerBuilder.com. All rights reserved. The information contained in this article may not be published, broadcast or otherwise distributed without prior written authority.

Article Reprints

Permission must be obtained from CareerBuilder.com to reprint any of its articles. Please send a request to cbreprints@permissionsgroup.com.

Story Filed Thursday, September 01, 2011 - 4:56 PM