



The Best Way to Find a Job- Still

As I continue to work with families across the country, as well as locally, one of the most common challenges facing young people (and the most common daily life concern voiced by their parents) is the struggle of finding a job. It can be a high school or college student looking for a summer job, college graduates looking for full-time employment, or a young adult who has decided to change career directions. But the complaint is the same — I (they) can't find a job. And they are getting discouraged and feeling stuck.

Now if we “weed out” those who are only half-heartedly looking for a job (they maybe don't feel the pinch of needed finances yet) or those who are still looking for the “perfect” job (that is, the one that meets all of their criteria), most have been putting forth significant effort. They have updated their resume, they are looking at the classified ads of available jobs (whether in the local newspaper or through on-line sites), and they are posting their resume and application on the mammoth job-search sites like monster.com and careerbuilder.com .

But the problem is — they are not finding jobs. They may have a telephone interview or even a “first” interview. But that is as far as it goes. And really, they aren't finding too many jobs that “fit” them. What they are looking for doesn't seem to be out there. And after a few weeks (or months), panic begins to set in. That is usually when I hear about their search, and their dilemma.

Now I know people find jobs through monster.com and its equivalencies. Otherwise, employers wouldn't post job openings on the site. But I can tell you that I am hearing lots of negative stories from employers and managers who have attempted to use the job search websites. One of the most common complaints is that they receive hundreds of applications that aren't even nominally qualified for the position. So they have to weed through hundreds of applicants to get to the possibly qualified. Secondly, they get overwhelmed with the number of applicants and really don't have the time or resources to sort through them all. So they default to the age old process employers have used for decades — hiring someone they know or someone referred to them by a friend, business associate or former employee. It's called hiring through your personal network.

Networking is still the best way to find a job. Using your relationships to gain an edge in the hiring process jumps you past the hundreds of online applicants sitting in their email box. And let me explain why employers defer to this process.

First, most businesses in the United States (89%) are family-owned businesses. And family-owned businesses create 78% of all new jobs in our economy. Now some family owned businesses are large (like Mary Kay Cosmetics), but most employ 100 or fewer employees. And smaller businesses often don't have a real smooth hiring process — it usually includes the supervisor who is trying to fill a position. Follow me here — most supervisors and managers aren't trained in the hiring process, they feel incompetent and uncomfortable doing it, and hiring people takes time and energy away from their primary job responsibilities. So they want to hire someone fast and get it over as soon as possible. (They also tend to procrastinate in the process.) Therefore, the easier you can make the process for them, the better for you.

Secondly, you have to understand what employers are looking for. Being honest, there are a lot of weirdo's out there — strange people, unhealthy people, people who aren't really interested in working - they just want a paycheck. And employers have had a lot of negative experiences with people who look good on their resume or in an interview, and then turn out to be a real pain to work with. And employers want to avoid more of these experiences. But legal issues prevent them from using personality measures to screen out unhealthy people. So the next best method is to either hire someone you know or hire someone a respected friend recommends. They turn to their network of friends to reduce the risk of making a "bad hire".

You see, most employers today realize they are going to have to train whoever they hire because most companies are quite specialized in what they do. You probably don't know their accounting software, the CAD system they use for designing airplane parts, or don't know their product line. But they can't train people in character — and that is what they are looking for. They want someone:

- *who will show up for work
- *who will listen and follow directions
- *who is self-motivated and wants to learn
- *who has the ability to get along with others
- *who has integrity and will do a job well done.

And the best way to find someone with these qualities is to have someone they trust recommend a potential employee to them.

So, if you are (or a member of your family is) looking for a job, here is what you should do.

1. Think about your friends (and your friends' parents), your parents' friends, your siblings' friends, people you know from previous jobs, teachers from school, friends from activities you have been involved in, neighbors, friends from church — all of the community connections you or your family has had. And start brainstorming on people who run businesses or are involved in organizations related to the field you are trying to work in.

2. Here's the key. Don't try to find the person who may be able to offer you a job. With the exception of summer jobs, it is highly unlikely that you actually know a person who is hiring for a position you would fit. What you are looking for is — someone who knows the person who is hiring. Business people know other business people — either as vendors and suppliers, customers, or competitors. And they meet together and talk, and often mention, "If you hear of someone who has an accounting background and is looking for a job, send them my way."

3. Focus on people who know a lot of people. Financial advisors, insurance salesmen, pastors, teachers/professors, counselors/psychologists — all come into contact with a lot of business owners and managers/supervisors on a day to day business. Call them and say, "I am looking for a job in the area of, who would you recommend I talk to about this?"

4. Don't just talk to people and stop there. No matter who you talk to, ask this question: "Who else do you know that it might be good for me to contact?" This is true, especially when you have talked to a potential lead and it is "dry" (it doesn't lead anywhere productive right now). Remember, you are trying to get names of people who know people who are hiring. And also, always follow up with a note or email with your contact information. Often, an employer might not be hiring right now but in two, four or six weeks an unexpected need arises. If they have your contact information, they can get a hold of you. If they don't, they can't — and you lose an opportunity.

So do yourself a favor. Use the method that is going to bring you the best results. Focus your time and energy on "working" your relationship network (and keep your posting online applications to a minimum). I can't "guarantee" results, but I tell you from experience (both personally and those whom I coach), this is the way to go.