

# **Tips for a Tough Job Market**

Jobseekers in today's corporate world face stiffer employment standards and tougher hiring techniques. Companies of all sizes now are single-minded about productivity and bottom-line performance.

Competition for jobs is on the increase as management seeks and hires only those who appear to have the most potential for helping to boost company profits. Although it may sound cold blooded, employees currently on the payroll in many organizations will stay only as long as they produce.

It has become more important than ever for a job applicant to convince the interviewer that he or she is the best person for the job. Modesty has no place in a competitive employment interview. Even though you may be the strong silent type, you have to learn to explain how wonderful you are without sounding like a braggart.

## **Winning Strategies**

Here are some tried and true tips for coming out on top in today's rigorous job market:

- Prepare a detailed resume, but do not give it to anyone unless asked. It is far better to "talk" your capabilities and accomplishments to a prospective employer.
- Finding a job has nothing to do with possession of a vast array of "contacts." You do not need to know someone or have an introduction to talk to a potential employer.
- Compile a list of your achievements, large and small, then select the most relevant ones to emphasize in the interview.
- Make your conversation "results and accomplishments" oriented, rather than general and fuzzy.
- Relax in the interview and be yourself, not who you think the world wants you to be. Playing a role usually backfires.
- Getting a job is a matter of numbers. If you go on 50 interviews, you have a better chance of landing a good job than if you only go on two or three.
- Practice job interviewing by going out and doing it rather than rehearsing in front of a mirror. You can learn best in the interviewing situation, and also by the rejection process that goes with it.
- Remember you are selling a product - yourself - so you need to be somewhat presumptuous. Use the telephone to contact employers and set up interviews. Most letters go in the "round file."
- Consider job hunting a full-time job. If you are unemployed, you should put in eight- to 10-hour days looking for work, at least five days a week.
- Do not wait for someone to call you with a job offer. Make follow-up calls. Ask for the "order."
- Remember, the employer is always right. Interviewers are buying something their companies want, so do not try to sell them something else. Hiring managers can expect at least six equivalently qualified persons for every job that is open.
- Do not waste valuable time asking about vacations, holidays or benefits. You are not interviewing the company. They are interviewing you, and will provide information on compensation later in the interviewing process.
- Know how to get to the interview. If you are late for the appointment, even for a good reason, it may be held against you. Do not risk it.
- Do not criticize your former employers, no matter what you think of them. No one wants to hire a complainer.
- Smile. Simple advice, but happy people get jobs because employers want pleasant people working for them.
- You are more likely to win a new job because the new employer likes you, rather than because he or she thinks you are competent.

## Other Considerations

As you provide key information about yourself to a prospective employer, the interview should also provide you with information and insights on whether the job is a good fit. Among the major factors to consider:

**Do you like the people?** This is the single most important criterion. The people should be those with whom you would enjoy working, and the work environment one that you feel confident of fitting into.

**Can you do the job?** If you can do the job routinely and automatically, reject it no matter what the salary. By taking something too easy, you are not advancing yourself or working up to your potential. You will not be offered a job that is far beyond your capabilities.

**Do you like the position?** Accepting a job that you may not like in hopes of working into something better later on is risky, because you will not perform your best at something you don't like. The position should be challenging and interesting, offer potential for advancement, and be something you want to work at for several years.

**If it is necessary to relocate, will you fit into the new community?** Consider the size of the community, its location and the level of sophistication. You and your spouse's attitude toward the community is critical. If you are open-minded and have realistic expectations, you probably can find happiness most anywhere. If you harbor strong preconceptions about geographical identities, i.e., big city versus small town, or one region's extreme merits or faults, a relocation is more difficult. Living near extended family is essential for many people.

**Does business travel pose a problem?** You need to determine if travel, and how much travel, you and your family can live with. A one- or two-day trip every other month is one thing; a six-month assignment in a foreign country is something else entirely. You need to have an up-front understanding about business travel with your spouse and children. If frequent or extended periods of travel are involved, the position may not be worth the possible sacrifices in your particular circumstance.

**Is the entire package satisfactory,** including salary and all benefits? If the offer does not meet your needs, negotiate. Once an employer chooses you, the other candidates pale in comparison. If accepting a lower salary or reduced benefits seems likely to become a source of discontent, it will be reflected in your performance and attitude toward others in the company.