

WHY YOU NEED TO TAKE OFFLINE ACTION IN YOUR JOB SEARCH



Summary: Taking offline action in your job search can do wonders for your future career. Here's how you can do it.

Krista Houghton received her diploma from Washington State University with confidence and a smile, knowing that she was one of the lucky few starting a new job a few weeks after graduation. She was leaving behind her days of slaving at summer jobs as a receptionist and deli-counter cashier and beginning a career as a sales manager for Marriott Hotels, a good job with a company that promotes achievers. Her outlook couldn't be rosier.

For Kevin Little, who recently earned a bachelor's degree in graphic design from the State University of New York (SUNY), the picture was very different. He had no job lined up and was quite depressed. With no money, he couldn't get an apartment, so going home to his tiny hometown was the only option. He wasn't sure what he'd done wrong in his job search. He'd searched the Internet, e-mailed resumes, created some avant-garde work samples, but no employer called. Life, he said, was "miserable."

Where Houghton had networked extensively, developed a professional resume, sent targeted letters to hiring managers and was willing to move to a new city, Little used only the Internet and focused solely on Boston – a tough city to start out in since it's flooded with 100,000 new grads from area colleges all clamoring for jobs. Houghton needs to make some changes in his job-search tactics. The following are proven strategies for success:

- **Get off the Internet.** The big job boards are the least likely places you'll find a new position. Applying at these sites is equivalent to entering a cyberspace black hole. Surveys of job seekers and employers show that less than 2% of people land jobs this way. Better to network and talk to friends, family members, neighbors, teachers and former bosses. Since 63% of all jobs are found this way, **networking** is the fastest route to success.
- **Define your job target.** Most new grads don't know what job they want. Says a human-resources manager for a Fortune 500 company, "We get thousands of resumes from new grads, and few ever state a specific job they want to perform. Do they really think I'm going to spend my time figuring that out for them? Definitely not in the 15 seconds I have to glance at their resume before I move on to the next one."
- **Review your talents and interests,** and identify some positions you think they'd match. Talk to professionals who work in those jobs. Ask about the pros and cons of their work to find out what the jobs are really like, not how you imagine them to be. Then make your decision and begin to search for those specific jobs.
- **Don't blast your resume.** Starbucks gets nearly 1,000 resumes each day. Microsoft receives more than 50,000 a month. These electronic documents have overwhelmed employers. Few grads ever mail resumes directly to the managers who would be their bosses (not human-resources staffers). But job seekers who send resumes to these hiring managers often land the very best jobs. Write a cover letter stating your desired job and listing the skills you have to do it. Advertise the abilities you already possess (these could include computer, communications, research, teamwork, customer-service, organizational and other skills). Send a one-page resume that lists your accomplishments and follow up with a phone call.
- **Avoid the large "glamour" companies.** The Fortune 500 have been laying off thousands of employees. These employers are the least likely to hire you. Most hiring this year is with small-company and nonprofit employers, so don't overlook them. Further, many city, state and federal government jobs can offer great career opportunities, so use contacts to learn more about openings at these employers. Smaller businesses offer a chance to get more experience and develop your career faster. Ask friends and family for leads because networking is the best way to find these employers.
- **Recognize that employers make snap decisions.** Most unsuccessful applicants lose the job in the first minute of the interview. That's why it's critical to focus the employer quickly on how well you can perform the job. One successful technique for doing this is to create a "verbal business card." Analyze the job, select your five top selling points, link them together in a few sentences. This is your "60-second sell." Practice it before your interview to make sure you have answers to potential questions. And look professional. Your appearance must project that of a qualified job candidate. For both women and men, conservative suits are the right choice.
- **Be choosy about the position you accept.** Your goal should be to gain experience. Even temporary jobs and volunteer work can help you move into a more interesting job and better company, because you'll have recent experience to add to your resume. Choose a position in which you'll learn a great deal. Seek a boss who appears to take an interest in you and your professional development. His or her mentorship and guidance will set the stage for the fast job growth, so make your choice carefully.

Still not sure how to move forward? Visit your campus career-services center, read other articles and books, take a job search seminar, or consider hiring a career counselor to guide you.