

SEEK THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OTHERS IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

There was a guy in my fraternity known as *The Shadow*, who did this all the time. Also, when I moved to California there was a girl who worked for our company, who the other employees started calling *The Shadow*, to my astonishment. In sororities, fraternities and, indeed, workplaces all across America, there are shadows-people who let others do all the work and then sweep in at the last moment and steal the show.

Shadowing is not only popular on the party scene; it is also popular in business, in nature, and in the [job search market](#).

Several years ago I was doing some work outside my office and one of my employees came down to talk to me. He was a writer.

"You have a phone call on my line. Can you take it at my desk?"

I walked into the employee's office and took a seat at his desk. The computer in his office was on and right in front of me was some correspondence between him and another writer in our office. They were comparing leads for other writing jobs, and sharing job search information. The correspondence was quite in depth and went into detail about the location of the other employer, the pay of the job and so forth. Since the correspondence was right in front of my face, I was naturally intrigued and could not help staring at it. As I spoke with the caller I absorbed what I saw on the computer screen.

I was, of course, disappointed by the fact that the employee was interested in looking for another job, since he had been working in our company for years. After my initial shock wore off, I realized that something interesting was going on, and I started to consider the massive advantages we can gain by comparing notes and collaborating with others when we are looking for job opportunities. The two employees both had been interviewing and looking at other jobs. Each was telling the other about good places to apply, poor places to apply, jobs that seemed to be one thing but were not, and so forth. It was as if they had doubled up in order to achieve the most effective job search possible for both of them.

There is a huge advantage in working with others to help find jobs. The other person you are working with will pound the pavement and do a lot of the work for you, as you share the load. You do not necessarily need to apply to every job, interview with every employer, and research every job yourself to get the best result. There can be real drawbacks in being self sufficient in your job search, and not collaborating with others. The more people you know who are looking for jobs, the more you should pool all your information together, because the information everybody has can be of great value to the entire group.

Sharks are content to eat virtually any other fish in the ocean. However, there is one fish that the shark will not eat: It is the pilot fish, which provides great benefit to the shark. Once a shark has eaten another fish, the pilot fish cleans the teeth of the shark and eats the small bits of dead fish all around the shark's teeth. It is an excellent relationship for both the shark and for the pilot fish. The shark gets its teeth cleaned, and the pilot fish gets to eat without having to hunt. According to one account:

The pilot fish's relationship with sharks is a mutualist one; the pilot fish gains protection from predators, while the shark gains freedom from parasites. It was often said by sailors that sharks and pilot fish share something like a "close companionship"; there were even tales of this fish following ships which had captured "their" shark for up to six weeks and showing signs of distress in its absence.

Whatever the veracity of such reports, it is extremely rare that a shark will feed on a pilot fish, and smaller pilot fish are frequently observed swimming into sharks' mouths to clean away fragments of food from between their teeth. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilot_fish

This relationship between the pilot fish and the shark is an example of two species collaborating to achieve an outcome. The pilot fish are smart: They let the shark do all of their work for them. You should be smart in your job search as well. Why should you spend all of your time tracking down jobs and learning about employers when there is a faster and much more effective way to do this? You can get other job seekers to do all the work for you. When you get other job seekers to do work for you, you can tap into all the pavement pounding, research and trial-and-error that the other job seekers have done. Think about how much time you may have spent looking for a job. If you can let others do all this work for you, you will do much better in your job search.

If you know of others who are looking for jobs in your industry, the smartest thing you can possibly do is to contact these people and talk to them about their job search. If you do this and nothing more you will do incredibly well.

I had an intensely private attorney acquaintance that, at one time, decided to move from another market to Los Angeles. Since I was actively involved in the [legal recruiting market](#) and this person was an excellent attorney, I could have easily helped him move to a high paying and reputable law firm in Los Angeles. However, the person did not want to "network" with me or other recruiters, and decided to pursue his job search all on his own, without letting others know anything about what he was doing. This attorney, who had been making \$180,000 a year before he moved to Los Angeles, ended up taking a job for around \$110,000 a year.

"The job market is really bad. There were not a lot of ads in the paper and this was the best job I was able to get," he later told another acquaintance of mine.

The paper? I was incredulous when I heard this. Most legal employers had stopped advertising their jobs in the paper over a decade ago. The jobs were, instead, listed in online publications and other areas. This person had been so private about his job search, though, that he did not even know any of this. Had the person been aware of this, he could have easily gotten a job paying \$180,000 a year, or possibly more. However, because he was not able to network with others, and to obtain valuable and current information about the market, he accepted a job that offered well below his market potential. The few times I saw the attorney over the following years I told him some stories that illustrated the importance of having good information when [searching for a job](#)-just to get him thinking. The attorney stayed with his lower paying job for several years before eventually moving on to a better job. I think (but do not know) that he probably followed my advice the next time he looked for a job.

In your job search, you must make use of each and every asset available to you. It is important to be strategic and to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of others. Remember that others often possess the knowledge and have done the work that can help make you successful in your own conquest. Seek out this knowledge, and learn from the experiences of others. Then use this information to the best of your ability, and you will find success.

This article was originally published in www.aharrisonbarnes.com. A. Harrison Barnes is the founder and CEO of CareerMission.com, the parent company of more than 100 job search websites, employment services, recruiting firms, online employment news magazines and student loan companies. Harrison also writes daily articles to inspire and motivate job seekers. Log on to HarrisonBarnes.com to read many more such inspirational articles.