

Overwhelmed Jobseekers – How to Improve Your Employment Chances

By Anne Wight, GCDF, CFLE, and CCRR
Military Spouse Corporate Career Network

With the economy struggling and employers faced with difficult financially-driven decisions to lay off workers, job seekers are also struggling as they try to find the right job while competing against thousands of other worthy job seekers. What can an overwhelmed job seeker do to find the right job, or at least a good job, in these difficult times?

Many job seekers turn to mass-producing resumes, applying to any position that comes close to what they want or can do, using classified ads and online sources. The work involved in finding all the jobs and in submitting all the information makes job seekers feel as though they are working hard in their job search. Not only is that a very poor approach to finding a job, it can now be even more dangerous because of identity theft predators and other employment scams.

The basic questions are how to find legitimate job openings, how to avoid as many scams as possible, and how to stand out from the crowd to be noticed by a legitimate employer. Legitimate job openings remain numerous even in these difficult economic times. They are based on skills in demand in various locations. For example, healthcare remains a career field that overall is hiring, but nurses in some locations are not finding work. Before starting a job search, a good self-assessment by job seekers of the skills they have and those that are needed in their location is critical. If job seekers are mobile and able to relocate to an area where their skills are needed, they are in better shape than many others. The housing market decline has made relocation very difficult to impossible for many private sector job seekers.

How do job seekers find legitimate job openings? The best way is through personalized services such as networking, physical (“brick and mortar”) staffing agencies, and some specialized or governmental websites. Networking remains the very best way to job search because employers are flooded with job applicants and a good, personalized referral helps them cut down the time and effort they spend to find good candidates to interview. Job boards online may or may not be good to use, because some check out the employers and positions they post, while others don’t do any checking. It is up to the job seeker to do the checking for each position of interest found online or some other method that does not have a personal connection. Even when a position and employer seem legitimate, job seekers should still take steps to avoid various scams. The Identity Theft Resource Center has an excellent guide online at http://www.idtheftcenter.org/artman2/publish/m_press/Identity_Thieves_Prowling_for_Job_Seekers.shtml

Here are a few of the steps they recommend:

- Never put your SSN on a resume. Just put your city and state on the resume.
- Open a separate email account for your job search and keep your primary email address private.

- Check out a company you found on a website carefully before giving them your information. You can find information on a company through the Better Business Bureau or the State Attorney General where the company is located.
- Avoid any website that requires you to “pre-register” with your SSN, home address or driver’s license number. Also, you should not be required to prepay to view job listings. Both these requirements are strong indicators of a scam.
- Update your computer security prior to emailing resumes and receiving email correspondence.
- Make sure the person who contacted you actually works at the listed company and is not someone who has posted a job pretending to be part of a company. Call the company involved, and ask for the Human Resources Department.
- Job seekers should be wary of some common job scams. Avoid any company, especially a foreign company that wants to hire you as a “payment representative” or “accounts receivable clerk.”
- Another scam is to notify you that you are one of the finalists for a job, and they need your Social Security number to do a background check. If you have not had a face-to-face interview with the company, you should be very skeptical. No one gets a job based on a resume alone.

Once a legitimate job opening is found, job seekers need to ensure their resumes are well-prepared and targeted to each particular opening for which they apply. Employers often use scanners, either electronic or administrative staff, to preview resumes. If skills and accomplishments are not noted in 15-30 seconds, the resume is usually trashed. A basic, well-crafted resume should be prepared before searching for job openings and then that basic resume should be edited to fit each particular position of interest.

Job searching is a process that requires patience and attention to detail. Scams abound that promise various diplomas without earning credits from an accredited source, positions are advertised that are “too good to be true,” and identity thieves are prowling for overwhelmed job seekers who are becoming desperate. Job seekers who take the time to know how to find legitimate job openings, how to avoid as many scams as possible, and how to stand out from the crowd to be noticed by a legitimate employer will be better prepared to turn a job search into a good job.

The Military Spouse Corporate Career Network is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with MOUs from all Service branches. It was created by a Navy spouse and is operated by military spouses and other military-affiliated persons to create a personalized network and placement opportunities for all eligible military-affiliated job seekers. See <http://www.msccn.org> for more information.

