

Where are the jobs?

There are still job vacancies during economic downturn but one has to dig deeper to unearth them.

Good times or bad, businesses have to continue and they will still need manpower to run them. However, in the current dire economic condition, job vacancies are few and far between. What makes it especially challenging is that there will be more applicants for every advertised vacancy and employers are reviewing every qualified candidate with more stringent requirements.

To survive the job search in such times, job seekers should not rely solely on the traditional newspaper advertisements and online job portals. Although these avenues will continue to be the key sources of employment prospects, job seekers will have to look beyond to explore other channels in order to discover those hidden opportunities and get a head start in the search for jobs.

Coming out

With more people being affected by corporate restructuring and downsizing, retrenchments and lay-offs are no longer taboo. Job seekers should not feel ashamed of their circumstances. It is vital that they come to terms with the situation and start their lives afresh. To begin on their job hunt, they are encouraged to mobilise their army of contacts such as friends and ex-colleagues, to help.

Network, network, network

Many career advisors maintain that networking remains as one of the most effective job search strategies. These days, whenever a job opening surfaces within an organisation, the HR department would first circulate this piece of information internally and encourage staff referrals for suitable candidates. Unless there is limited success, most of the employers would avoid the use of paid advertisements.

During such alumni, professional affiliation or even recreational club events, job seekers get first-hand information about latest job openings within business associates' or ex-schoolmates' companies. A referral or favourable recommendation from a senior executive could also increase a job seeker's chance of gaining an interview and landing a job.

Another prevalent networking avenue is through professional networking portals such as LinkedIn, XING and Spoke. As these sites are popular with professionals, many head hunters and recruiters use them to network and source for potential candidates.

Know your recruiter

It pays to build a relationship and know your recruiter better regardless of the market situation. Many people reject calls from recruiters during boom time and have the misconception that they should only contact recruitment agencies or search firms when they need a job. Recruiters are like financial planners; working adults should maintain contact with them. This is because a good recruiter would remember their candidates and be the first to contact them whenever there is a suitable career opportunity.

Help from community groups

Community groups such as the Community Development Councils (CDCs) and NTUC Women's Development Secretariat are very active in organising workshops and recruitment drives to assist unemployed professionals and women in their job search. These events equip participants with job-hunting skills and link them up with prospective employers. These are excellent settings for job seekers to meet up with the potential employers and find out more about the available openings.

Cast your net wider

Many job seekers would have registered at the various online job portals such as ST701.com, JobsDB.com, and eFinancialCareers.sg. While these are the usual sources of jobs on the internet, opportunities are not limited to these job portals.

In the midst of cost cuttings and budget constraints, many organisations are using their corporate websites to advertise job vacancies. This allows job seekers to apply for jobs directly with the employer who may not have made the vacancy public.

Career fairs and recruitment drives

Career fairs and recruitment drives are some of the best places to get an interview and eventually, a job. In order to yield the best results from attending these events, job seekers should find out the available job opportunities at the event either from the event website or organiser. When at the fair, job seekers should approach the recruiter or HR practitioner, give them their customised resumes and secure an interview on the spot. As it is not often that employers conduct on-the-spot interviews, job seekers must capitalise on their opportunities during the event.

Read between the lines

Amidst distressing news reports of shutdowns and retrenchments, there could be job opportunities in the newspapers. Sometimes, CEOs of performing companies would reveal that they are expanding and are looking into increasing their headcount. This is when job seekers could write in to the company for prospects on any job opportunity.

Job searching during a downturn could be a daunting task but one needs to stay focused and optimistic. Apart from a sound job search strategy, job seekers must also invest time and effort to beef up their resumes. In today's employment market, it is paramount that both go hand-in-hand, missing either would no doubt lengthen the job search process. Additionally, job seekers should not rely solely on one job search approach and instead, try all possible avenues to secure a job.