

Increase your odds: Explore the hidden job market

By Kevin Steele

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Many job seekers become discouraged in their searches because the volume of interviews secured is usually quite disproportionate to the number of resumes sent.

In many cases, not only are applicants not given an interview, but they are not even given the courtesy of a response.

One way to increase your response ratio and get more encouraging results is to limit your competition. Job boards and classified ads are very useful tools for job seekers, but when relied upon too heavily (or solely) they can be limiting.

When you apply for a job, you immediately put yourself in competition with hundreds of other potentially qualified candidates. To increase your chance at success, you need to take a more creative approach toward uncovering appropriate positions that are not broadcast to large audiences. You need to tap into the "hidden job market."

Sources of Hidden Jobs

Company Web Sites: Based on your experience, skill set and areas of interest, identify companies where you feel you would be a good fit. Then find those companies' web sites and search them for opportunities that may not be advertised elsewhere.

Even if the right job is not available, take the initiative to send a cover letter and resume to the appropriate senior executive in your field of expertise. The job you seek may be in the works but not yet posted or formalized and your resume could be the catalyst that starts the ball rolling.

Professional Associations: Investigate professional associations and networking groups in your field. These organizations can provide a tremendous amount of information on upcoming tradeshows, conferences and meetings.

Many association web sites also include membership directories and career centers where you can upload your resume and search for opportunities. The information available at these web sites can provide valuable possibilities for you to meet and correspond with individuals who can aid your search and help you make connections.

Small Occupation-Specific Job Sites: Many web sites have been created recently that cater to a much smaller and more selective audience (i.e. www.jobsinthemoney.com). Research sites in your field of interest. Although the volume of jobs will be smaller than a major board, there will not be as many viewers and more importantly - as many potential competitors.

College Alumni Career Centers: Most colleges and universities have established alumni career centers. This "alumni only" feature allows you access to employer postings that are not available to the general public.

You will find most of the hiring authorities posting here are alumni themselves and are thus more favorably predisposed to other alumni. Many college web sites also feature alumni directories that can be searched by employer. Use your common college experience as a way to expand your network - and tap even deeper into the hidden job market.

Networking: For today's job seeker, who you know is frequently as important as what you know. Take the time to contact friends, relatives, former colleagues and ex-bosses. Spread the word regarding the type of opportunity in which you are interested. Even if people are uncomfortable formally referring you, make sure they know passing along a lead is still valuable.

Other Employment Related Sites: There are other employment portals that can be very beneficial and effective. These sites contain tips on networking, interviewing and resume preparation along with company and association directories.

All this information can aid you in crafting your strategy to uncover hidden jobs. Examples include: www.job-hunt.org and www.careerresource.net.

Finding a new job is hard work. But having a strategic approach that combines the hidden job market with more readily available sources is sure to put you ahead of your competition.

Continue to use the primary job boards in your search but augment them with a newer, more tailored and creative approach that will help you uncover jobs that are not widely advertised. Reducing the competition will increase your chances of coming out on top.

Kevin Steele joined Winter, Wyman & Co. in 1978 and became President in 1996. In his role, Kevin oversees the daily operations and strategic development activities of Winter, Wyman. Prior to joining the firm, Kevin was the North American HR Manager for Data General Corporation. He is a graduate of Providence College in Rhode Island. Headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts, Winter, Wyman specializes in permanent and contract staffing for Accounting and Finance, HR and technology professionals. Learn more at www.winterwyman.com.



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