

## AFTER THE HOLIDAYS AND OTHER BAD JOB SEARCH ADVICE

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So you network with a few folks to let them know your job search still hasn't yielded you what you want. It's late October, November or early December of any time, any year and in any place. You begin to hear phrases like this:

*"Yeah, the holidays are a bad time to search. People are distracted. I mean, all my jobs I got, I got early in the year. When it gets near Thanksgiving it's time to crank it back and spend time with family not job search. People don't want to be bothered. Stay out of the game until early January; that's when things get back to normal. "*

So you just think that after the holidays will be a better time to search.

Perhaps you call a recruiter or an employed friend who says that same thing. You repeat one or more of these lines to them, your friends and even acquaintances. You begin to believe it to. Maybe you do bother people when you call. Look even at the online advertisements; there don't seem to be as many although you haven't really counted. Your last company's early December party seemed to absorb a lot of time and office talk. So you gear down your search, pull back the reins on networking and re-read your slightly dwindling checking and savings accounts. Maybe you have enough money to sail through the holidays so no big deal. You'll apply online or send a few things out but you will wait, shop and do like everyone else. It's consensus time. The holidays just aren't the time to search, right? Everyone agrees. I don't. Let's examine the thought process behind holiday job search misconceptions.

Are the holidays really such a bad time to search? If you believe this, repeat it and take less action during the holidays you have a clear disadvantage. I coach my clients to network heavily and take more action during the holidays. (Even if you plan to start your search in January, you need to prepare now. Most people are woefully unprepared to properly job search.) By the way, some companies, organizations and governments need to hire prior to the end of the year. They may have incentives, requisitions and interviews that need to be done. In fact, if the consensus attitude is that the holidays are such a bad time to search amongst employed but looking or the unemployed then why wouldn't it be smart and strategic to increase your proper search efforts?

Logically, there is less competition! In my years working with and networking with human resources managers and recruiters, I am told that January overwhelms them for a number of reasons. Budgets must be implemented, new laws go into effect and jobseekers inundate them with resumes, emails and phone calls. Budgets and money needs to be spent; some organizations must do this prior to the end of the year.

One of my clients said this after being hired for a medical sales position last November:

*"One of the reasons I got hired was that a person quit to move with their family back to California. The hiring manager or recruiter had to fill a position before the end of the year or the company was going to go external and open the search. The company didn't expect this to happen. Since I was ready to interview and available, had my resume developed properly and had received your advice on interviews I stood out. I got the position and opportunity I wanted. I must have been in the right place at the right time."*

The truth is many positions come open near the holidays. It's a good time for individuals to make moves, quit and end employment. Remember this – the Bureau of Labor Statistics report that 65% people are dissatisfied with their jobs. The bottom line remains people do quit. This may put companies into a bit of a crisis mode. But it's an advantage to you. Often companies outpace and layoff toward the end of the

year. Look at these statistics. Does that mean it's a bad time to search? No, it is what gets reported during the holidays.

So if, as a jobseeker, you're head is in the news and reading all the negative headlines then you may be influenced to slow down your search. But don't pay attention to macro-headlines. Newspapers and news shows need to sell advertisements and attract attention. Isn't it more dramatic to report sad news about layoffs during the holiday season? Don't listen to the macro-headlines or reports. No matter how well-documented or true these reports often have nothing to do with what's important – the micro-news – or your search.

Think about this. Do you realize that external recruiters or headhunters are salespeople? What do sales people like to have happen to ensure that they have a good year? They want to make sales. They want to close business. They want to make bonus and commission. They would like to place people. Many recruiters have said to me they like jobseekers who can remain focused during the holidays. It demonstrates their ability to focus and not be distracted by external events. Taking long vacations during the holidays can hurt productive jobseekers if they expect interviews. If you do take time off forward your phones, return emails and keep your calendar flexible.

Holidays can be a highly stressful, emotional time for you if you are in search but don't give in to emotion - focus. Be productive with your time and your attitude. Searching properly and preparing for a job search late in the year or near the holidays is a good idea. When is a good time to search? It's a good time to search all the time if you use best practices: develop a new, professional resume; practice interviewing with a career coach; role-play for networking events; obtain research reports and plan networking with key decision-makers at selected companies; develop written plans and goals.

It may be a good time to face reality about your resume too. What you do to handle these issues matters and it's something you can work on during the holidays, including: Choppy Work History, Out of Work, Unrelated Experience, Lack of Experience, Too Young or Too Old, Overqualified, Hazy Objective, No Degree, Criminal Record, Termination Questions.

Even if you slow down or take time off during the holidays you should be researching, practicing interview skills and ensuring that you're prepared for your next career move. This action and thought-process never stops and should not slow down for any productive jobseeker.

Other tips to remain productive during the holidays include networking extensively and acting happy throughout the holiday season. No one wants to network with or interview a depressed, negative sounding person. Who wants to hire or recommend that person? The people you meet have a reason to talk (hey, it's the holidays!) and they are generally in a positive mood. You need to match their upbeat attitude and remain thankful about what you have to offer and what you want to share. This positive outlook works very effectively at networking events or over the phone. Don't just hand out resumes at your wife's office Christmas party or church social. Learn how to network properly and use the decorum you should.

To open a door to new careers jobseekers must focus on embracing change. Change happens abruptly in business. It happens abruptly throughout many a career path and at all times of the year. What's in our control? You control your actions and your attitudes; that may be about all you can control. You don't control business calendars and you don't have a crystal ball as to when a company should hire. Companies, the government and other institutions hire because they have a need. How can you ensure that you will fill that need? It's even more important think this way during the holidays.

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