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Young people can add cash for holidays
Take steps to catch better job for the season
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Some young people are starting to wonder how they can earn cash for gifts. Many will turn to seasonal holiday employment, which can be an easy and effective way for older teens and college students returning home for holiday breaks to make money. But with the dismal outlook on this year's holiday jobs, seasonal jobs are more competitive than in years past.

Young people looking for jobs have their work cut out for them. But there are key steps they can take to snag the most coveted seasonal jobs. And there are big mistakes that could mean hanging up their hopes of having a cash-happy holiday season.

As owner and operator of local Spherion franchises, which specialize in recruiting and staffing businesses, Marj Bartok has seen her share of the mistakes young people make when going for a job.

Common complaints from would-be employers include poor body language, gum chewing during interviews and too-casual dress.

"A lot of times, I try to give them some advice during that interview (with Spherion) and say, 'Gee, next time you may try it this way,' " she says. "They do need to definitely have a little bit of help or someone telling them before they come in for these interviews what is expected of them."

Get started on search

And now's the time to start if you're interested in landing interviews for holiday jobs, according to Laura De Carlo, executive director of Career Directors International, a global association of career professionals.

"The big sales start right after Thanksgiving," she said. "There's got to be training, so everyone is probably gearing up now to hire."

One key thing seasonal employers look for in new hires is flexibility, which is important, especially when they have to get employees trained quickly and get them working even quicker.

"The difference in ease-of-hire in a seasonal employee is having someone who's willing to work weekends, evenings, whatever schedule you give them,"

DeCarlo says. "The more flexible you are, the better chance you have."

It's also important to get a head start by compiling a list of all of the local companies hiring seasonally and what that company's needs are, Bartok says.

"Young people today are very computer literate," she said. "They can get online and find out what companies are hiring and focus their attention on that. And if they can get a referral or if they know somebody who has a friend who owns a business, send them there."

A good presentation also is important, DeCarlo says.

"Find out what that particular entity is known for," she said. "And a lot of these holiday jobs don't require a resumé, so any time you have a resumé that stresses skills in customer service and communication, it's going to be a big plus."

Ditto, says Anna Goeppinger, spokeswoman for Target Corp. The retail giant expects to add about 50 people to each of its Brevard County, Fla., stores this season, and people who are customer-service oriented are the main thing the employer looks for.

"We look for potential team members who join our team to be really dedicated to serving our guests and ensuring that those guests can find what they need," she said. "We look for a strong passion in customer service."

Young are flexible

Young people in particular are a good fit for the company because of their flexibility. And according to Goeppinger, employee benefits such as competitive wages and a merchandise discount can be beneficial to teens and college students.

There's also the possibility of long-term employment, as Goeppinger says the company sees seasonal hiring as another way to recruit employees.

"If we find that we have a phenomenal team member working at our store and think they could do well on a permanent basis, we definitely want to offer that opportunity to them," she said.
