

Get More Opportunities and Better Offers

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An analysis of Canadian job search trends indicates that career opportunities are opening up in unprecedented numbers. According to current demographics, the mass retirement of baby boomers is changing the landscape of our labour market. These days, for every one person coming into the Canadian workforce, two are leaving their job. And, as seasoned professionals transition out of the market, more senior-level opportunities are opening up than ever before. So, if there are so many good jobs available, why is it so difficult to find these opportunities and get great offers?

You've probably heard this quote, often attributed to Albert Einstein: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." If you are finding that your job search is not working, you must change the way you are conducting it. Here are some things that you might be able to do differently in order to generate more opportunities and better job offers:

FOCUS ON YOUR TARGET MARKET AND DRAW THEM IN

Don't just apply haphazardly to all jobs. Target the organizations where you strongly believe that you will succeed. Select only positions and companies that are a solid fit for you – and then do your market research. If you choose prospects that interest you, you will find that you are more likely to do the homework required to get your foot in the door.

Perform investigative interviews with people within the organization that you are targeting. Learn as much as you can about the company, its challenges, needs, and objectives. Figure out the corporate culture, personality, and style – especially those of the executive team, hiring manager, and recruiters.

When you discover the right opportunity, exploit everything that you know about them to ensure that they do not overlook you. Do what it takes to show that you are not the average job seeker. If this means making a special trip to drop off a hard copy of a résumé to the company – then do it. People like it when you care about them. When the company learns how hard you worked to address their needs, they will know that you are the "real thing."

CREATE DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH MULTIPLE RECRUITERS

When it comes to recruitment firms, you need to be at “top of mind.” Most recruiters have limited openings and will work on your behalf only if they see you as a good fit. After all, recruiters are not working for you – they are working to fill postings for companies.

Many recruiters work in niches. Ensure that you find and target the ones that specialize in your area of interest. Recruiters are usually too busy to meet – or even remember – every applicant that sends in a résumé, so pick up the phone and make sure that they know you. If they do not recall receiving your résumé, send another copy along right away.

Recruiters are generally well connected. It is in your best interest to make sure that you get to know them well enough to be an asset – not a bother. If you share meaningful leads with them, they will be appreciative. Recruiters who know and like you will often market your résumé to their industry contacts. If they see you as a valuable asset and a potential future client, you will be in the driver’s seat.

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TAP INTO THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

If you want to attract the best opportunities, do not compete with the multitudes applying to job postings. It is a documented fact that experienced professionals find the best opportunities more quickly by tapping into the hidden job market – jobs that are not widely advertised.

Employers may not be looking for outside candidates, but you can create your own openings by connecting directly with organizations that have no jobs posted. By meeting with decision-makers, you can establish yourself as a powerful ally in moving the organization towards its objectives. And – best of all – you will not be competing with anyone else for the role you created.

PRESENT A CAREER BRAND THAT SCREAMS VALUE

First impressions count – in fact, every impression that you make counts. There is no denying the power of branding. From the moment you present yourself to the public, you are making a statement.

The business presence you create for yourself must stand apart from others, but it also needs to be authentic and aligned with your career objectives. Develop a robust career brand that clearly delineates who you are and what you have to offer potential employers. “Live and breathe” your brand. To be effective, your brand must be apparent throughout your job search and in everything you do. Your message must be evident whenever you are networking, interviewing, or simply socializing. Consider your brand in your selection of business attire, your verbal communication, and your manners.

A strong career brand separates you from your competitors. In the eyes of employers, you become more memorable. You are seen as a significant catch and a valuable resource.

PUT FORWARD A PORTFOLIO THAT SETS YOU APART

One of your strongest career branding tools is your portfolio. Trash your template résumé and create a unique portfolio that is an advertisement of your brand. Of course, your branded résumé is the central document in the portfolio, and it must effectively represent you. The rest of your portfolio will reinforce your message, with a consistent “look and feel.”

A dynamic, creative, strategic, and thoughtful portfolio that relates your distinguishing factors will dazzle the recruiter. If most people are submitting a “cookie cutter” résumé, you will naturally stand apart. With a proper portfolio, when you meet with a recruiter, you will distinguish yourself from the others. Rather than slapping a flimsy résumé on the desk, you will present your spectacular portfolio package. By doing this, you will already have a step-up on all the other candidates and the opportunity will be yours to seize.

CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE ANYONE ELSE DOES

Once finished with the interview, many candidates just sit back and wait for a call. Stand apart from the rest. Make yourself known as a take-charge professional who is very interested in the opportunity and will do what it takes to make it happen.

Shortly after your interview, follow up with a professional “thank-you” letter. In your letter, emphasize how your strengths relate to the opportunity. Stress the fact that you are excited about moving forward, so that the recruiter clearly understands your interest in the position.

Don’t rest on your laurels quite yet— follow up once again by phone to remind the decision-maker that you are still very interested in the opportunity. By connecting with the organization in a proactive and professional way, you will create a positive and memorable impression.

When it comes to getting more opportunities and better offers, you must persevere. Don’t just go along with the status quo – take a proactive approach in your search. Just because there are tons of openings posted in cyberspace, it does not simply follow that you are going to be the one called for an interview. There are many components to the job search, which must be conducted effectively in order for recruiters to perceive you to be the “cream of the crop.” If you exploit as many strategies as possible, you will be seen as one who is worthy of the top opportunities and the best offers.

About the Author

Sharon Graham is an executive résumé writer, employment interview strategist, and author of Best Canadian Résumés. With multiple certifications in résumé, interview, and career strategy, Sharon has elevated the industry by delivering cutting-edge innovations to résumé writers and career practitioners across the nation. She assists six-figure job seekers through her consulting firm Graham Management Group, www.GrahamManagement.com and is executive director of Career Professionals of Canada. You can reach Sharon by e-mailing info@GrahamManagement.com.