

You and Your Job Hunt

The following article is an excerpt from Sell Yourself! The Career Handbook for Canadian University Students and Prospective Students (1981-82 Edition).

Written by Theresa Goulet, a 1981 graduate of the University of Calgary, Sell Yourself! offers job hunting advice based on a nation wide survey of employers of Canadian university graduates conducted in the fall of 1981. Sell Yourself! will be published and available in university bookstores in February.

If your graduating this year you may already have heard the "horror stories" about how tight the job market is, how a university degree isn't as marketable as it once was, and how it can take graduates of non-professional disciplines as long as a year to find a permanent full-time job. Ignore the stories. They're not untrue - but they don't have to apply to you. Regardless of how bad (or good) the general job situation is for most graduates of your discipline, no "horror story" or Stats Canada unemployment figure can tell you the one thing that should concern you - your personal job situation.

And, as long as you take your job hunt seriously and treat it as almost a full-time job in itself, you can succeed on the job market. Following are some suggestions on how you can find out about job openings.

Read Newspaper Ads

Job openings are usually advertised in the Business section of daily papers and may be listed under such headings as "Careers", "Employment Opportunities", or "Help Wanted". Since some companies will only advertise in one issue it's wise to check the newspaper every day.

As soon as you find an ad that interests you, prepare a resume that shows your qualifications for the job. (Most ads have job descriptions: "Will

be responsible for...", "Should have experience at..." and you should tailor your resume to the job description.) Try to get your resume in within three days after the ad appears (and make sure it arrives -- drop it off if the company's in town). You should also clip the ad to your resume and specify which position you're applying for since companies sometimes advertise several positions at the same time.

Use Your Campus Placement Office

Your campus placement office can provide you with listings of job vacancies. These alone can be valuable but you should also take advantage of the other services offered. The placement staff can provide you with information on when recruiters are coming, show you how to sign up for interviews, give you an application form to fill in (which they then copy and pass on to recruiters), and provide you with information about the companies you will be interviewed by.

These services are particularly valuable if you're graduating from a professional discipline such as engineering, computer science, or accounting, but you should visit the placement office even if you're graduating with a general arts or science degree to make sure you don't miss any opportunities. While you're there you can pick up free copies of publications that will help you in your job hunt: "Career Planning Annual", "The Financial Post's Career's and the Job Market", and "Canadian Campus Magazine".

Read Professional Journals

Many professional organizations produce journals (or magazines) for their members and some of these journals list job openings. Most campus libraries carry professional journals among their periodicals collections and you can find out about them by asking the reference librarian.

Use the Grapevine

Tell all your friends and relatives that you're looking for a job and explain what you're looking for. You might not get any results from the grapevine but (who knows?) you could get a call from someone who has read an ad you missed or has heard about an opening that hasn't yet been advertised.

Visit a Personnel Agency

Private personnel agencies (they're listed in the yellow pages) are responsible for finding suitable candidates to fill positions and if you want to explore all job hunting options you might consider using the services of one. You should realize, however, that their goal is not to help you; the agencies work for the employers. (The employers pay the agencies for their services.) So don't expect much personal attention.

Talk to Employers

The best way to find out what kind of positions are available in a particular company is to ask a personnel officer in that company. Almost without exception employers are happy to provide you with information if you approach them in a business like manner. When seeking information from companies you have two options: 1) you can write to the head office for a copy of their recruitment literature and annual report (See "Conduct a Direct Mail Campaign" for details on how to find company addresses) or 2) you can call the local office for an information interview.

Are you skeptical about using the information interview approach? Don't be: 94% of the Canadian employers I surveyed will "sometimes" or "often" speak to job hunters who phone them even when there are no positions available and 73% will "sometimes" or "often" speak with job hunters who drop in without an appointment. It's good public relations for them.

And, even if no positions are available at the

time you apply, you might be the answer to their prayers in a year or so.

However, even though employers are (usually) tolerant of such activities you certainly won't leave a favourable impression if you don't exhibit some common courtesy. Since employers and personnel officers are busy people you should first call to set up a formal appointment. The vast majority will be happy to meet with you and provide you with information about careers in their company.

Try the Trans-Canada Job Exchange

The Trans-Canada Job Exchange is a pleasant variation on the personnel agency. They too match job-hunters with employers but it's done on a confidential basis by a computer. You will be matched with employers from across Canada or from one region of Canada (there are also Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Alberta Job Exchanges). For an information package and a registration form write to:

Trans-Canada Job Exchange, 1110 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 2206, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1G8.

Buy a Copy of the "Globe and Mail's Career Opportunities"

Each week all the career ads that have been run in the previous week's issues of the "Globe and Mail" are published in a separate issue ("Career Opportunities") and distributed to newsstands across Canada. You can invest in a single issue or take out a lengthy subscription. (I advise you to do the former; approach your student association to do the latter.)

Conduct a Direct Mail Campaign

Don't just wait for your ideal job to be advertised - apply for it before the employer needs to advertise! A mass mailout to employers can be one of the most effective ways to acquire job offers (employers would much rather find an employee through an unsolicited resume than go through the grueling task of