

Part-time job might be solution in difficult times

Before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the United States economy was experiencing a slowdown. Some called it a recession, while others hesitated to give it that label. But most agreed that American businesses and workers were facing tougher times.

Since then, the conversation has taken on an urgent tone. We now anticipate the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, particularly in industries such as hospitality and travel. In the short term, at least, the only job growth I would bet on is airport security.

This is not the best of all possible times to be unemployed. But if you are, we'd better get to work on getting you back to work. Here are some strategies to implement:

- **Take a part-time job.**

Almost any job will do. The plan is to get cash flowing back into the house, and to help you structure your time. Don't worry that the job will interfere with your search. You need about 20 hours a week, with half of them occurring during the business day, to make a good job search. That leaves plenty of time for part-time work.

- **Review your skills.**

Note all the things you can do; including physical labor and serving others. As you build this list disregard college degrees or career paths you've developed. This should be a list of the things you can do from which you will choose the job targets that are most attainable in the short term. If you need to veer away from a career path for a year or two, don't panic. You can return to it if it's really important to you.

- **Structure your job search.**

Since fewer companies are advertising jobs, you will need to create a list of places that right have the jobs you targeted in the above step. Create a plan to contact five to 10 companies a week, regardless of whether they have advertised an opening.

- **Revise your contact methods.**

It may feel efficient to post your resume on the Internet, but in tight times, jobs go to the people who know people. It's time for you to meet more people. Start by increasing your networking efforts: Go to meetings; talk to friends, relatives and colleagues; show up at neighborhood gatherings. Do what it takes to make connections.

- **Stay focused.**

You need to meet an employer face to face before you can be offered a job. Revise all your job search conversations to include "I'd like to stop by to talk with you in person for a few minutes; would you have time in the afternoon any day this week?" The idea is not to be pushy, but to identify the employers who might be serious about you. Those who are serious will agree to meet, if not this week, then next. Those who aren't serious should be relegated to your B list.

- **Down scale expectations.**

This is not the time to hold out for the best offer. Employers don't know what the next quarter will bring and they are responding to the uncertainty in predictable ways: by limiting, salaries and other expenses. Review your own budget and look for ways to down scale so that you can afford to take lower-paying jobs.

- **Take early offers.**

In uncertain times, an early but mediocre offer is better than the great job that comes too late. The goal is to get your life back on track as quickly as possible.

- **Try not to worry.**

Whatever else is going on, remember that your primary task is to find just one job. Don't carry the burden of the world into your interviews. Just straighten your shoulders, give a firm handshake, and tell your interviewer why you're the best person for the job.

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