

Don't Believe These 8 Job Search Myths

Time to rethink your assumptions about the hiring process.

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No, you will not hear back from every company to which you apply. (iStockPhoto)

If you are tired of the job search rat race, then stop doing what you are doing. While you are at it, dismiss all the assumptions you've made about how jobs get filled. People hire people, not résumés. Let's debunk your beliefs and myths associated with job searching:

MYTH: You will find your next job by applying online. You may believe that if you apply to enough jobs, you'll eventually beat the odds and land one. While

applying to jobs may make you feel productive, **a recent CareerXroads survey shows that only 15 percent of positions were filled through job boards.** Most jobs are either filled internally or through referrals. When you spend all your time and energy scoping out jobs and applying, you're hurting your chances.

So what else should you be doing? Try a combination of things. Successful job seekers use a variety of tactics, such as contacting industry-specific recruiting agencies or third-party recruiters, meeting one-on-one with past colleagues, attending professional association meetings, volunteering and meeting new people every day. If this sounds daunting or almost impossible, **remember: More than 70 percent of people land jobs through networking.**

MYTH: You should expect to hear a response soon after you apply. After you have taken time to research a company, modify your résumé and go through the application process, you assume you'll hear something. The reality is you may not hear back from the company. Expect this to be the norm and take proactive steps. Plan to follow up with someone in human resources after you have submitted your application. Ask what the time frame is for filling the job, and then ask if your application was received. Always end every conversation by asking when you should follow up next and with whom. The really eager job seekers will make that call the same day the application is submitted. The less assertive job seekers wait about a week.

MYTH: Your cover letter will always be read in full. You can't make someone read your cover letter. In reality, some people will never read a cover letter, and others won't look at your résumé until after reading your cover letter. And there are varying preferences in between. The bottom line is that you should always include a customized cover letter that explains specifically why you are interested in and qualified for the job and shares something about the company to show you are a fit. If you don't take the time to do this, then why should the company take time to review your qualifications for the job?

MYTH: You should network with human resources. One of the many roles human resources serves is to fill open job requisitions. Often, there are numerous requisitions in the pipeline, and the No. 1 priority is to fill these jobs. Requesting

to network with human resources is not in your best interest nor in the best interest of the busy human resources professional. He or she probably doesn't know about future openings or department-level plans. And even if he or she did, the advice you get would be to wait until you see something posted.

Invest your time reaching out to peer-level employees inside a company. Learn how these employees landed the job, what the company culture is like and the skills and responsibilities required in the job.

MYTH: The best time to network is after the job has been posted. You see the perfect job posted and believe you're a match. With great excitement, you reach out to someone inside the company only to get ignored or brushed off. You're doing the right thing, so why isn't it working? You're too late to the party. That job has probably been circulating inside the company for weeks. The person you are contacting may even be in the running for the job.

The best time to network is in advance of job opportunities being posted. In fact, networking after a job has been posted really isn't networking – it's tracking down a job. That's not bad – in fact, it's recommended – but it's not truly networking. Start identifying companies you would like to work for, and begin networking before jobs are posted.

MYTH: You will be granted an interview for every job you apply to. If you've purposely submitted a vague or general résumé with the hope that a recruiter will call for more details, think again. Most of the time, you will not receive a call. Recruiters, human resources staff and the hiring manager only call you if you are a good match for the job. If your application and résumé don't show how you are a perfect match for the job, the recruiter has very little interest in speaking with you.

MYTH: Your references are contacted before or during the interview process. Every company has a different policy regarding reference checking. Seldom will your references get checked while résumés are being reviewed or during the interview process. It costs time and money to verify references, and if

there are multiple candidates applying and interviewing, this can be a costly investment.

On the other hand, a quick Internet search can often reveal information, so some recruiters may be checking you out online. Carefully select the people you want to serve as references, and prepare them to provide the most relevant and important details about you.

MYTH: Your résumé is the most important job search tool. It is important to have a well-written résumé. However, how many hours do you spend updating, modifying, tweaking and adapting it? Too many. **The numerous hours you spend hiding behind a computer screen means you aren't spending time on the phone reaching out to people or attending one-on-one networking meetings.**

Invest your time wisely. How many people will actually take the time to thoroughly review your résumé and ask you questions about each job you held? Much of the detail you obsess over is irrelevant to hiring professionals or will be overlooked in haste.

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Hannah Morgan provides actionable job search and career guidance. She is passionate about keeping up with the latest job search trends and social networking strategies. Hannah has been featured in numerous national media outlets such as Money Magazine, Huffington Post and USA Today and is listed as a top resource by some of the biggest names in the careers industry. Hannah is the author of "The Infographic Resume" and co-author of "Social Media for Business Success." Besides contributing to U.S. News On Careers, she also writes articles for her own site Career Sherpa. You can follow her on Twitter @careersherpa, Facebook and Google+.