

Ten Best Ways to Go OFFLINE... and Get the Job

Richard Bolles, author of the legendary job search book, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, warns that the biggest mistake he sees job hunters make is spending too long looking online and getting nowhere. Experts estimate that only 4% to 10% of online job seekers have any success using that method. What's a better option? Ask for leads and info from family, friends, professors, and any other folks you run into. That's how most people find a job.

1. Get From Online to F2F

If you've been spending time searching online, you may have developed virtual friendships with members of industry, special interest, or alumni groups. See if you can take those relationships offline. "Maintaining contacts made online is time consuming," says Vicky Oliver author of *201 Smart Answers to Business Etiquette Questions*. "Then I realized that this LinkedIn group I belong to, for the alums of Ivies, was actually meeting in my area, so I attended an event. What a great way to network!"

If there isn't a group already meeting, set up one yourself (maybe through MeetUps.com) or invite one person for coffee. Face time can take a relationship to a whole new level.

2. Job Fairs, Conferences and Classes

Go anywhere groups of people in your field assemble. Because everyone has a common interest, and often their intention is to make connections—conversation will flow naturally. While job fairs catering to your major and career interests are best, it may be worth casting a bigger net. "Say you hear about a medical clinical professional job fair, and maybe you're looking for a staff accountant job. Pay your money and show up anyway," says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. "There will be HR folks there, so bring your resume, dress in interview clothes, and talk to them." Downs especially recommends this tactic of networking for people who are extroverted and present well.

3. Set Up Informational Interviews

Spending 20 minutes with someone in the trenches is the best way to research a position, industry, or company you've targeted. It's a good way to add contacts to your network too. You can have interesting, meaningful conversations. They'll also be more likely to want to help you—possibly put in a good word on your behalf or hand-deliver your resume.

Tap your network of friends and family and keep your request simple. Try some variation of this script: "Do you know anyone who works in sports marketing?" Or, "Do you know anyone who works at Nike?" Or, "Do you know anyone who might know someone who knows such a person?" and finally, "Is it okay for me to contact them and mention you suggested I get in touch?"

At the end of each informational interview, ask for more leads so you get passed on to others.

4. Be the Total Package

Tattoos, body piercings, or hipster attire may be your personal image statement, but don't let your appearance scream so loudly that people can't hear what you're saying. "Some girls will come in with a small nose ring, and while I don't think there's anything wrong with that—it doesn't help," says Downs. "Look as conservative as you can and remove all distractions."

5. Tell a Story About Yourself

In addition to discussing general topics of interest, learn how to slip in a bit about your job search: "I'm looking for a staff accountant job." Later, practice relaying more detailed, career-related information about yourself. "You need to be specific about your skills and talents," said Peggy Klaus, author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, "so you're able to explain what it is that you do. Prepare and rehearse little stories so it comes off conversationally."

6. Be a Giver

Now is a great time to volunteer for a nonprofit or industry group. You'll get out of the house, feel a sense of accomplishment, and pick up some new skills. Maybe best of all: "Nonprofits have people serving on their boards that may be able to help you, and you'd never make their acquaintance otherwise," says Downs.

7. Put on a Happy Face

A job search can be stressful, especially if it's protracted, but "don't bring your emotional baggage with you," when you're out and about, says Klaus. "You may have just had a fight with your girlfriend, but you still you have to act as if you're delighted to be there."

8. Gyms, Coffee Shops, and Bike Paths

Develop the ability to strike up a casual conversation about things that interest you, such as karaoke, city bikes, or house-roasted coffee. (Geeky is good.) The low-risk first step prepares you to engage in step two, which is an information-gathering career-related conversation, and finally, the actual job interview.

Plus, by meeting people everywhere you go, you can engage innumerable pairs of eyes and ears helping you look for a job, which is what often leads to success. "The best way to find a job is still friends of friends," says Oliver. "Build a network of connections so that you hear about a job *before* it's posted."

9. Network From Within

Taking a not-perfect-fit job at a dream company is a great way to network and develop relationships from the inside. "Say you want to be a software developer at Apple, but you're offered a junior quality control position. Take it and in a few years you may be right where you want to be," says Tim Sanders, author of *Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*. Don't worry about getting stuck in your first role. If you're a talented person who makes a good fit with the corporate culture, a smart company will find a way to train and promote you.

10. Rinse and Repeat

Even after you're hired, don't stop adding to your network and nurturing your contacts. In an uncertain world, no job is permanent; we're all temporary employees.

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