

Improving Your Chances In Today's Job Market

from the American Counseling Association

While the nation's economy is improving in many areas, the employment market still presents numerous challenges. If you are currently job hunting, now is a good time to examine how you're presenting yourself and to see if there are ways to improve your marketability.

The following suggestions can help you better focus your job search, especially if you are in the midst of looking for a new career path:

1. Explore your desires. Take time to evaluate where you are in life and where you'd like to be. What career options would excite you, make you happy? Give yourself permission to dream.

2. Inventory yourself. What are your best work skills? How good are they? Are there things you need to improve? What do you, or would you, enjoy most in your daily work?

3. Update your resume. Update it regularly. Check out a local career center, or a current resume writing book, to be sure yours is looking polished and presenting the best picture of you. Consider doing multiple resumes, each highlighting a specific skill or interest area.

4. Attend workshops. Look for opportunities to strengthen or broaden your skills. Consider taking a local community college course to add new skills.

5. Network. Networking is the primary way people get interviews. Make contacts a key strategy in your job search. Check out your local career center, volunteer for committees at your place of worship or a local charity, call old work colleagues and friends. "Who you know" really does matter. The more people you meet, the more likely you are to hear about a job opening in an area that interests you, and the more likely you are to meet someone who can recommend you. Asking for "informational interviews" with those in a company or a field that interests you is another way to make contacts.

6. Make yourself marketable. Take a hard, honest look at yourself. If you were an employer, would you hire you? What can you do to improve your marketability? Write out a plan with a timeline over the next month or so, then take the steps to make changes.

Finding a job or changing to a new career can not only bring financial rewards, but can result in your being happier and more fulfilled in your work. If you need help, consider talking to a professional counselor who specializes in career counseling.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

###

words: 398