

5 Tips for looking for full-time work during the holidays

There is a common misconception that searching for full-time work during the holiday season from Thanksgiving through New Year's is a complete waste of time. Nothing could be further from the truth. Managers are reviewing their year-end goals, while beginning to formulate the steps to achieving the next year's goals. Savvy job seekers step up the search, rather than gearing down, at this time.

Here are 5 tips for the holiday season job search:

Network: The shopping and eating season is about to begin. There are parties at work, festivities in homes, gatherings at churches, and neighborhood events. Now is the time network your way into a new job at the beginning of 2011. It's the perfect time to meet new people and get reacquainted with old colleagues in an informal way. Attend as many events as you can. Be prepared to tell your contacts that you are looking for work, and have an "elevator speech" ready to go about exactly what you want in a position. You never know where that next job lead might materialize.

Be proactive: Follow up your networking activities by sending a holiday greeting with your calling card enclosed, including information on how to best get in touch with you, to any new people or old acquaintances you've seen at parties to remind them for a second time of your job search. Create a job search schedule and take at least one action each day to reach out, whether it's responding to a classified ad or calling a new contact. Research companies on the web in order to demonstrate your knowledge and interest in an employer. Keep your resume and Linked In profile updated because 95% of all employers are checking you out via the web as well. Positive action will deter despair.

Think outside the retail box: There are more jobs than just working at a mall: think beyond retail to office work, with year end accounting and next year budgeting needs; end of calendar year enrollment periods for insurance companies; tax professionals and filings that must be done to get charitable giving breaks. Consider hiring on with a temp agency that specializes in a skill you have to offer. There are extra opportunities in the hospitality industry this time of year if you want to get a foot in the door there. Caterers and restaurants are often looking for more hands to serve large parties. If you demonstrate grace under pressure in these situations, you may even end up being recruited to a management position.

Use seasonal work as an experiment: Consider taking a part-time job as a test of whether or not you want full-time employment with an organization. Shine your light with a good attitude and a willingness to pitch in with whatever needs to be done. If you decide you don't want to work for the organization, no harm done: you've made a bit of money, a few more contacts or references, and added some experience to your resume. If you do want to work there, you know who to talk to about full-time employment and what the exact opportunities for you are there.

Be of good cheer: Remind yourself to breathe, and be the calm person in the midst of the holiday frenzy, whether you are attending events or working part-time. Managers who are swamped with end of the year deadlines plus their own family obligations may not have time to talk to you in the middle of the storm, but rest assured they will notice a good attitude and remember you when the season ends. Ask about openings even if they are not being advertised. Make a note to yourself about the best time to contact hiring authorities after the season's end, and make sure to follow-up. So few people follow-up these days that this action itself will make a good impression.

In short, don't believe the myths that the holiday season is a bad time to look for work. It is not. There are a lot of opportunities to grow your contacts and talk to people about work opportunities. You have the potential to leverage seasonal work into something permanent. Be positive and proactive and think to yourself, "'Tis the season for hiring."

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