

Marketing Yourself During the Holidays

Though most job seekers deliberately hold back during the holiday period, feeling it is a waste of time because most key decision makers are on vacation, this is actually considered one of the better job-searching seasons. In fact, one reason is exactly this - most people deliberately wait on the sidelines, so the competition is often less.

Another is that despite this ominous economy as 2008 draws to a close, most people love to engage in holiday cheer and will be more likely to meet with you for networking get-togethers now, and can give you more time before they have to hit the ground running in January. Get them while you can.

Though there will be fewer dollars to throw around in 2009, most managers should have next year's budgets fairly solidified by the holiday season, so networking at this critical time is an opportunity to include yourself in that 2009 budget. Another way of looking at this is - you snooze, you lose.

Holiday Job Search Tips

- ▶ Send holiday cards to all of your business acquaintances. Respect religious diversity and use generic cards. Take the time to handwrite personal notes to individuals with whom you've recently networked, or plan on contacting for a networking meeting after the holidays.
- ▶ Send e-Cards and e-Mail to colleagues in your professional networking sites.
- ▶ Attend every holiday event you can possibly fit into your calendar. Think beyond your traditional job circle; this includes office parties, community gatherings, school activities, religious services, social club get-togethers, and more.
- ▶ Dress each morning as if you were attending a holiday event that day or evening, so you won't leave home inappropriately dressed should you receive an unexpected invitation to a party.
- ▶ Keep in mind that people are festive during the holidays, so block all forms of gloominess from your persona. An Eeyore face will be noticed from across the party room.
- ▶ Be conversant. Read the latest best seller, see a current movie, and be familiar with the latest developments in the nation and the world. Above all, avoid the "It's all about me" spiel.
- ▶ Listen more than talk, but definitely prepare and rehearse your two-minute elevator speech and then work the room when appropriate - you never know who might generate your next job lead. Don't dominate one person or a small group of people - circulate and mingle with everyone.
- ▶ Don't eat too much and limit alcohol to one drink; the last thing you want to do is worry about what you might have said, but can't remember, or for being perceived as a glutton. Hold your drink in your left hand so you are always ready to shake with a free, dry and warm right hand.

Job hunters who slow down their search between Thanksgiving and mid-January actually reduce their chances of finding a job at a time when many hiring decisions are made.

- ▶ Get introduced to as many new people as you can at holiday events, and then turn them into on-going networking connections after the holidays.
- ▶ Remember that networking is marketing, not sales, so don't walk into a holiday party with a huge pile of resumes under your arm. This is the time to lead with your marketing pitch; save the sales pitch (which includes your resume) for solid job leads.
- ▶ Invest in personal cards if you are unemployed. Use a reputable printing company, and keep the cards simple: your name, address, phone, email, and a very brief professional title, such as Certified Project Manager, Loan Specialist, or Marketing Representative.
- ▶ Consider seasonal work, if you can get it. Most stores and companies will take on extra temporary help during this time. Being able to demonstrate to prospective hiring managers that you took initiative to remain productive during job transition definitely helps, and can also help your frame of mind as well as your wallet. And you never know when that temporary gig can turn into a permanent spot.
- ▶ Volunteer. Many charitable organizations ramp up humanitarian activities during this time and need extra volunteer help. You never know when you can be serving up food in a soup kitchen alongside a senior executive from a potential employer.
- ▶ If you are working but plan to make a move early next year, take advantage of holiday down time to network and interview. While some professions go into overdrive during the holidays, many slow down, so use this to your advantage while you can. You may not have the flexibility to meet people as freely during the first quarter when your own job goes into overdrive.



So what are you waiting for.....don't snooze.....schmooze...!!!

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