

October 2009

## Navigating the hidden job market

Main Entry: **hidden**

Function: *adjective*

Date: 13th century

1 : being out of sight or not readily apparent:

**CONCEALED**

2 : **OBSCURE, UNEXPLAINED, UNDISCLOSED**

**hiddenness** \-nəs\ *noun*

- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Given this definition, you may well ask how a job market might be hidden, concealed, obscured or undisclosed? Let's begin by considering the ways in which jobs might be exposed, revealed, disclosed or made overt.

Advertisements in newspapers and magazines, recruiters, employers' websites, and internet job search engines spring to mind. Which leaves us pondering other potential avenues for employment - like talking with friends, relatives and neighbours, having a catch-up with past colleagues, or connecting with other professionals on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter.

And here's where we bump up against a different 80-20 rule! Statistics and anecdotal evidence indicate that only 20% of jobs are advertised, with the remaining 80% constituting the hidden job market - those opportunities you uncover through research, networking and sometimes cold calling.

The "hidden job market" can include people who are promoted, people who go from part- to full-time, people who are hired on the basis of who they know, or where the role is advertised through a personal network rather than a formal one. Essentially, any time a person gains employment in a position which is not opened to competition (i.e. formal advertising, placed with a recruiter or such), it is a job filled by the "hidden job market."

Networking is defined as the process of building and establishing relationships. Networking involves information exchange, conversation, some give and take, as well as establishing a common interest. One of the things holding people back from networking is the fear that they have nothing to give back or contribute to the interaction. This is a particularly common notion held by job seekers who feel networking merely involves going cap-in-hand, asking someone for a job, and nothing else, thus deeming the interaction as a purely selfish effort.

However, when you think about it, this notion couldn't be further from the truth! Even if the sole purpose of the interaction is to ask about the availability of a job, each of us have something we can reciprocate.

For example,

1. If you are an information gatherer, you may have information to offer...
  - a. Being involved in investigating the job market for the purpose of finding out about job availability or how you can get an advantage over others, you can offer your viewpoints about organisations, industries and professions to others. This would be useful for individuals who are looking to advance their own careers.
  - b. You may have information about upcoming courses, seminars, conferences or workshops that others may be interested in.
  - c. As you are in the throes of managing your own career, you may be able to provide advice on how people could better manage their careers.
2. If you are a thinker, you may have ideas and opinions to offer that people will be interested in.
3. If you are a listener, lend someone your ear. Most people enjoy being listened to and value your personal support.

... and so on.

Other important parts to effective job search networking include: identify your existing network and continually add new contacts; keep good records of whom you've spoken to and agreed follow ups; develop a personal marketing plan with target industries and organisations and don't be afraid to ask for referrals.

Make sure you spend time contemplating where you've been, what you've done, what you know, and what might come next. Update LinkedIn or Facebook profiles and explore existing and possible new connections. Remember, the theory of *six degrees of separation* means you can have connections in employment, educational, professional or other organisational networks, sporting clubs, book reading clubs and other groups of people with similar hobbies or recreational interests, in addition to your friends, family, and community.

Now ask yourself, "How many people would accept a phone call from me right now?"

**"Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results."**

*[Herman Melville]*

## **A Traveller's Tale: How I lost my job and found another one**

### **Beyond the fork in the road: finding my bearings**

Hi there, it's me again – it seems I'm hooked! It's amazing what time out does for one's social life--albeit online. At 11.00 a.m. yesterday I had my first appointment with the career transition people. Two weeks have gone by since that awful Thursday morning when I was "let go". All things considered, it hasn't been that bad a time. I got a redundancy payout which will help pay the bills, my wife's been just great, and it's such a relief to know that someone will be helping me think about the *where to from here?*

So.... I get up early and dress as if I'm going to work – grey suit, white shirt and burgundy silk tie with little ivory coloured dots – smart, but conservative. Felt a bit weird after two weeks of hanging around in shorts and thongs but I thought it was important to make a good first impression. I get to the City on time and walk a block or two to the address I've been given.

I don't know what to expect so I feel a little nervous. The lady I met on that awful morning seemed really nice and told me what they were about, but I couldn't really take it in. So, sweating a little in my suit, I get to the third floor, head to Reception and ask for Jane, my consultant. A few minutes later, she comes out and greets me warmly. We shake hands and I follow her down a corridor, into a smallish room with a welcoming feel to it.

We sit down and she tells me a bit about herself—she used to be a Senior HR Manager. I give her my resume and to my surprise she doesn't want to read it straight away. She promises to give me feedback on it and advises me to slow down, not fire off resumes and applications, but instead do some thinking about the sort of organisation, industry and role, I feel drawn to. She gives me a set of manuals and talks me through the first couple of chapters which have a lot of self assessment type exercises. All too soon the hour's up and I have a tour of the office, which she says I should treat as my workplace. I will have access to all the facilities and they have a great series of workshops and seminars on researching, networking and interviewing, along with something she called job search work teams.

Today, I feel motivated, enthusiastic and hopeful and there is a spring in my step. More to come, so stay posted!

