
Career & Employment Center

Best and Worst Ways to Hunt for a Job

Adapted from Richard Bolles', *What Color Is Your Parachute?*

Many job-hunters are astonished when they find out their favorite job-hunting strategy is on the “least effective” list. Some strategies are more ineffective than others, so the experiences of experts can sometimes be very useful. The five worst ways to try to find the jobs that *are* out there, are listed here, in order, from those with the least dependable payoff, to those with the most.

The Five Worst Ways to Look for a Job

4 to 10%

1. **Using the Internet.** In this twenty-first century, the Internet makes access and availability between job-hunter and employer seem so easy. Unfortunately, the success rate of trying to find a job through the Internet turns out to be only 4 percent. **Exception:** if you are seeking a technical or computer-related job, an IT job, or a job in engineering, finances, or healthcare, the success rate rises, to somewhere around 10 percent. But for the other 20,000 job titles that are out there in the job-market, the success rate remains at 4% only.

7%

2. **Mailing out resumes to employers at random.** Out of every 100 job-hunters who use only this search method, 7 will get lucky and find a job thereby, while 93 will not – if they use only this method to search. (There are reportedly at least 40,000,000 resumes floating around out there on the Internet.)

7%

3. **Answering ads in professional or trade journals appropriate to your field.** This search method, like the one above, has just a 7 percent success rate.

5 to 24%

4. **Answering local newspaper ads.** 76 to 95 job hunters won't find a job this way. The fluctuation between 5 and 28 percent is due to the level of salary that is being sought; the higher the salary, the fewer job-hunters who are able to find a job using this search method.

5 to 28%

5. **Going to private employment agencies or search firms for help.** The percentage range is for the same reason as noted in #4. The success rate of this method has risen slightly in recent years, in the case of women but not of men.

Other less frequently used methods in the Least Effective category:

Going to places where employers pick out workers, such as union halls. This has an 8% success rate. Less than 15 percent of U.S. workers are union members, but it is claimed that those among them who do have access to a union hiring hall have a 22% success rate. What is not stated is how long it takes to get a job at the hall, and how temporary or short-lived such a job may be.

Taking a civil service examination. This has a 12 percent success rate.

Asking a former teacher or professor for job-leads. This also has a 12% success rate.

Going to the state/federal employment service office. This has a 14% success rate.

The Five Best Ways to Hunt for a Job

What does “best ways” mean? One useful way to think about this is in terms of your personal time and energy. It’s important to start with the most effective strategies first, to make the best use of your resources.

33%

1. **Asking for job-leads from: family members, friends, people in the community, staff at career centers – especially at your local community college for the high school or college where you graduated.** You ask them one simple question: do you know of any jobs at the place where you work – or elsewhere? This is one of the best ways to look for a job, however, 67 job-hunters out of 100 who use this method will still not succeed.

47%

2. **Knocking on the door of any employer, factory, or office that interests you, whether they are known to have a vacancy or not.** It should be noted that this method’s success rate is almost 7 times higher than the success rate for resumes. By going face-to-face you have a better chance of finding a job, than if you just send out your resume.

69%

3. **By yourself, using the phone book’s yellow pages to identify subjects or fields of interest to you in the town or city where you want to work, and then calling up the employers listed in that field, to ask if they are hiring for the type of position you can do, and do well.** By doing targeted phone calls by yourself, you have an almost ten times better chance of finding a job than if you had just sent out your resume.

84%

4. **In a group with other job-hunters, using the phone book's yellow pages to identify subjects or fields of interest to you, and then calling up the employers listed in that field, to ask if they are hiring for the type of position you can do well.** By doing targeted phone calls in a group, you have an almost 12 times better chance of finding a job than if you sent out your resume.

86%

5. **Doing a Life-Changing Job-Hunt.** This method, invented by John Crystal and myself (Richard Bolles), depends upon your doing extensive homework on yourself before you begin your job search. This homework always has three parts to it:
 1. **WHAT.** You need to inventory and identify what skills you have that you most enjoy using. These are called transferable skills, because they are transferable to any field/career that you choose, regardless of where you first picked them up.
 2. **WHERE.** You need to decide where you want to use your skills, where you would thrive, and where you do your most effective work.
 3. **HOW.** You need to decide how to get where you want to go. This includes finding out the names of the jobs you would be most interested in, and the names of organizations (in your preferred geographical area) which have such jobs to offer, and the names of people or the person there who actually has the power to hire you. And, how you can best approach that person to show him or her how your skills can add to the organization.

Any strategy you choose will help create momentum in your job search. Even if you combine some of the least effective strategies together to help you, it is still positive action. So choose wisely, based on your time, energy and resources, and try not to get discouraged. There is enough work out there for everyone, even if it doesn't look that way.