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Best job hunt strategy -- work at search full time

East Bay Business Times - by [David Goll](#)

Joel Garfinkle and Darryl Petersen both run East Bay job-coaching companies. But even in today's difficult market, they advocate different approaches for their clients.

Garfinkle, founder and owner of San Leandro-based Dream Job Coaching, likes the opportunities from networking. "Most people are too timid to really invest in themselves. They try to be too independent, like Lone-Ranger-types looking for jobs," Garfinkle says.

But Petersen, founder and owner of Lafayette-based Strategic Career Services, contends networking events are mostly a waste of personal resources. He advocates going directly after those who hire.

"Conventional wisdom has it that when you become unemployed, you take your friends and contacts out to lunch or dinner to find out about job leads, or attend the meetings of professional organizations to meet lots of people who make hiring decisions," Petersen says. "But most of the time, very few of your contacts are going to know about solid job leads. And most of the people who attend meetings are not top company officials or those who hire people. They are both real long shots."

Which of the strategies work? Obviously, both do because neither Garfinkle nor Petersen would still be in business if they couldn't help clients land jobs.

But they both agree on one thing job seekers need to be more serious than most people are willing to be, especially in light of the booming economy of the past five years and the current downsizings and market uncertainty.

"People have to put more effort into it than they are comfortable with," Garfinkle says. "They have to make it a full-time job, working at it for eight to nine hours a day. In my opinion, the economy is going to get worse before it gets better, so it's important to make a major commitment."

Petersen says the best attack for job seekers is a "direct mail" approach to target specific companies with customized resumes and cover letters. He tells his clients to figure out exactly what kind of work they want to do before approaching an employer.

"It sounds very basic, but too many people don't have a clear idea what job they want," Petersen says. "That makes them look unfocused and indecisive."

He urges his clients to do extensive research on a company before making contact, then targeting a high-level official with the ability to hire people or influence those who do. "Make sure the company matches reasonably well with your qualifications and interests," he says. "After sending your information, follow it up a week to 10 days later with a phone call."

Still, Garfinkle insists that regularly attending the meetings of professional organizations is an excellent way to job hunt and make the best use of time. "When you go it alone, it can take two or three times as long to find a job, which is a real drain on your resources," he says. "I don't even feel putting your resume on the Internet is all that effective. You've got to network with people in the field you want to work in. You've got to make the follow-up calls after you've sent a resume or had an interview."

Garfinkle does believe, though, that people pursuing jobs they feel passionate about should use "unconventional" methods to find them such as talking directly with a person already in the desired profession. Such a strategy works in any economy.

But, he adds, the downturn does present special problems.

"People seeking work tend to get rather depressed when times aren't good, which, in turn, causes them to get complacent and procrastinate in their job search," Garfinkle says. "In my opinion, people procrastinate when they get afraid of being rejected in a job interview. You have to have courage. You've got to develop a thick skin in an economy like this."

That provides even more impetus to the advice both job coaches give their clients to be more industrious and creative in approaching employers.

"My approach requires a lot of extra effort to do the research and craft effective cover letters and resumes for individual companies," Petersen says. "That can be a real barrier for some people."

Garfinkle agrees. "Because most people don't do it, the one who will get the job is the one who does all the extras," he says.

Petersen can be reached at 925-284-9795; Garfinkle can be reached at 1-888-326-2248 or at <http://www.dreamjobcoaching.com>.

Equal Time deals with workplace issues. To comment or suggest stories, contact David Goll at dgoll@bizjournals.com or 925-598-1436.

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