

LOOKING FOR A JOB

The outlook on the labour market remains very difficult. Finding a job thus requires both resourcefulness and tenacity.

The following is a list of steps that you will hopefully find useful in getting work. They are derived largely from my own personal, subjective experience of job-hunting, so I am open to any suggestions or criticisms you may have.

What attitude to take for finding a job?

1) **Think about what you want to do.** What do you want from a job: money, a chance to acquire skills and experience, the possibility to travel, a step in your career, or just an occupation that will pay the rent? Try to be clear in your own mind what it is that you are looking for. **But do not become inflexible.**

If you have a precise goal, ask yourself what you need to do to achieve it. If you are not sure of what you want to do, try to eliminate what you do not want to do.

2) **Be imaginative.** There are thousands of occupations and different types of employment. Your training gives you a number of basic skills that can be applied to a wide variety of jobs. Just because you are specialising in a particular area does **not** mean that you **must** work in a job that is immediately related to this area. Think about alternative fields in which you may be able to apply your practical job training.

3) **Be determined.** If you have a specific goal and really want to achieve it, you probably can. Do not let yourself be put-off easily. Most things require "5 percent inspiration and 95 percent perspiration".

4) **Nevertheless, try to be realistic.** Depending on your personality it is easy to be too optimistic or pessimistic. Both are wrong. You should try to assess accurately what your prospects are.

Where to look for a job?

There are various channels to explore when looking for a job. Some work is directly advertised, either in the press, but largely on Internet today. There are several private search engines, and Pôle Emploi also posts jobs on its web pages.

Connections can mean anything from outright nepotism (your father is the CEO of a company, your uncle works for General Motors etc.). It can also simply mean that your friend's or neighbour's boss is looking for somebody to replace J. Smith who has just left the firm.

In either case half the battle is already won. You know of a job opportunity, you know who to contact and you have some sort of recommendation. But remember, getting the job and **keeping** it still depend on your merit. Unless you have fabulously powerful connections, there are few, if any, guarantees.

Unsolicited applications can be an effective way of finding work if handled properly. From my own experience I increasingly believe that they involve careful preparation. It is not much good sending out hundreds of CVs into the blue. Instead you should employ a diverse, but planned strategy. Some of the main steps to follow are:

- 1) Try to think about the kind of companies that may be interested in you.
- 2) Try to get a list of such companies.
- 3) Try to get the name of the person who may select you, eg: the managing director for a small company, or the personnel director in a larger company. Telephone the company to ask if necessary.
- 4) Send your CV with a well thought-out and well-written letter.
- 5) Once you have written to your core group of companies ask yourself who else may be interested. This is where your **imagination** plays a vital role.
- 6) Only when these channels have been exhausted should you write off to anyone whose name springs to mind. When you have reached this stage, try to diversify. For example, send ten CVs to companies exporting to Germany, ten to companies working in tourism etc.

Remember, finding any job takes time. Allow for at least 2 months from sending your CVs to getting the job. In the case of unsolicited applications this can take at least three months, or more.

How will you be selected?

There are four traditional tools for evaluating a job application.

- 1) the application letter
- 2) the CV
- 3) the interview
- 4) the trial period

More recent selection procedures include:

- 1) Various **personality and intelligence tests**: eg: handwriting analysis, IQ tests, computer tests designed to examine the candidates personality. I myself am sceptical about these, and believe they are often an invasion of a candidate's privacy. Unfortunately, you may not always have the choice of deciding whether to do them or not.
- 2) **Role-play exercises**: often companies, especially larger ones, may ask you to participate in role-play exercises, in groups with other candidates. They are seeking to assess you behaviour in groups: sometimes they may be looking for skills as a team player; at other times they may be looking for other competencies. Your best bet is perhaps simply to be yourself.