

Tips for Job-Hunting During the Holidays

by Susan Johnston, for Yahoo! HotJobs

While the holidays might seem like a slow period for hiring, career experts say the season also presents an opportunity for job applicants to make an impression.

"Around the holidays, many job seekers are preoccupied with family gatherings and other distractions that keep them away from their searches," says Shawn Graham, author of "Courting Your Career" and director of MBA career services at the University of Pittsburgh. "As a result, the volume of applications for non-seasonal work is often lighter -- and that gives you, as a candidate, a greater chance of being seen."

Adds Mary Rosenbaum, a career coach and personal branding strategist at Your Career by Design, "Most companies work on their strategic plans during the fourth quarter and tend to be more open to a variety of potential hires that might fit with their strategic goals for the coming year."

Industries that use a bonus structure, like legal or financial firms, also anticipate turnover during the first quarter, because some employees leave after collecting their annual bonus.

So, how can job seekers stand out during the holiday season? Here are four ways to start:

Call during off hours.

"As the holidays approach, people are in and out of the office, and those who are at work often use that time to play catch up," says Graham. "Recruiters could use that time to give applicants of interest a longer look."

Since support staff may be out of the office, job seekers have a better chance of reaching an actual hiring manager or recruiter. One of the ways Graham suggests reaching managers when they aren't running in and out of meetings is to call before the start of the business day or after 5 p.m.

Avoid holiday gimmicks.

Some job seekers use cutesy ideas like sending a plate of Christmas cookies along with a cover letter or printing their [resumes](#) on holiday paper in the hopes that they'll get noticed. But Graham and Rosenbaum warn that these gimmicks can backfire.

"I'm not a fan of the holiday-inspired gimmick ploys," says Graham. "It's better to be more conservative. Make sure the content of your email is written persuasively and impactfully." By focusing on your skills rather than gimmicks, you also won't have to worry about offending people who celebrate different holidays.

Use events to build relationships, not beg for a job.

Holiday parties, end-of-the-year conferences, and other events all afford opportunities for [networking](#). But job seekers can also organize holiday drinks with people they want to connect or reconnect with, since people tend to be more open to socializing during this time of year.

"Get people together for holiday drinks at Joe's Pub or something," suggests Rosenbaum. "The idea right now is to have more face time and build a relationship. What you should be doing now during the holiday time is contacting them in a way that puts them on a more equal footing." She adds that if you're unsure about someone's holiday traditions, you can simply offer their family your best.

Don't lose focus.

Staying motivated during the holidays could give you an edge over those applicants who put their search on hold. According to Graham, "The biggest thing is to keep at it. Around the holidays, it's easy to get caught up in all the distractions. Set aside that time every day and continue to look for opportunities."

Says Rosenbaum, "The idea is for people not to assume that because it's the holiday season that they shouldn't redouble their efforts. This is a really good time of year. People are much more willing to go out for drinks and spend a little more time. Use this time to forge relationships, not just look for the job."

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