Fortune Favors the Prepared Mind

Job Market Improving Slowly

Many Companies Project Hiring Increases

Top Executives Report Hiring On the Rise

Do these “headlines” look familiar? We all read the same newspapers and watch the same news programs. The economy seems to be growing and companies appear to be bolstering their ranks. While many companies remain cautious due to the current uncertain political environment and are not leaping at the first glimpses of positive news, the employment picture does seem to be improving. What should this mean to you?

The answer to this question is: BE PREPARED! Whether you want to move up in your current company, are thinking of seeking a new position, or are in the midst of a job search, now is the time to make sure that you are absolutely ready when that perfect position or promotion appears out of nowhere. So, what exactly does “absolutely ready” mean?

Update your resume. Now is the time to dust off your resume and make sure it is completely up to date. Add any new roles you have taken on as well as any new accomplishment, awards or accolades you have received. If you have included a professional profile or summary on your resume, make sure it reflects your most relevant skills and attributes for the position you are seeking. Review job postings within your company or on outside internet sites to identify specific skills or qualifications that are frequently emphasized in the type of positions you are seeking. If you are seeking a position that is very different from your current role, you may need to use a different format than the one you now have.

It’s all about results. When describing your current and past roles, have you included the results of your work? It’s not enough simply to describe your roles and responsibilities; you need to demonstrate that your work had an impact on and added value to the company. When adding these results, remember that numbers are powerful! Whenever possible, quantify your results so that your contribution is clear. For example: “Introduced lean manufacturing practices that reduced material consumption by 25%” or “Developed and implemented a new marketing strategy that increased new business by over 50%”. If you are unable to quantify some of your accomplishments, let the English language be your friend; use adjectives like substantial, dramatic or measurable to describe their impact.

Have your stories ready. Be prepared to offer a detailed description of any and all accomplishments you include in your resume. “Gee, I don’t remember that much about that job; it was over four years ago” is a less than optimal response. In “competency” or “behavioral event” interview formats, you can expect questions like “Give me an example of a time when you...”. Your ability to provide detailed descriptions of how your actions produced results will help you convince your interviewer that you have a track record of success in the competencies valued by the company.

Revive your network. Being in the right place at the right time often is no accident. Reach out to people you have not contacted in a while. Ask them what is going on in their lives (and company) and let them know what you are doing (or seeking). Most people are busy and understand why time would elapse between contacts. Often, people are delighted to reconnect with you. Making the effort to get back in touch can help you remain current in the marketplace and will ensure that your “ambassadors” have their ears to the ground. Think of it this way: “Networking is not who or what you know, but what those who know you know about you.”

I hope these suggestions are helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me at jworth2@vcu.edu if you have specific questions or would like to arrange an appointment.