
Job-hunting in a tough market? 5 ways to make it easier

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TORONTO, April 3 /CNW/ -- In this economy, the thoughtful bird gets the worm, says expert

TORONTO, April 3 /CNW/ - With unemployment rates headed for 8% and organizations scaling back hiring plans, job hunting can seem harder than ever. But you'd be surprised at how easy it is to improve your chances.

"The trick is to raise your profile and look like a 'perfect fit' - without looking desperate," says Maureen Carroll, Recruiting Manager at Head2Head, an innovative recruiting solutions company headquartered in Toronto. "It's not about standing at the corner of Yonge and Bloor wearing a sandwich board; it's about networking and thoughtful responses."

Carroll, 36, knows what great candidates look like: she interviews more than 400 annually, and the Head2Head recruiting team is responsible for more than 13,000 hires every year.

"Job-hunting sucks at the best of times, and in a tight market it can be frustrating," says Carroll. "But there are lots of ways to make it easier - and less painful."

Carroll offers 5 tips for ensuring your resume gets the best results in a slower job market:

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1. Now is not the time to change careers. You may not be entirely happy with your current career niche, but this isn't the best time to start trying to make a huge change. "Look for opportunities to use the skills you have now," says Carroll. "Once you're established in a role you can look for ways to transition to a new career."

2. If you get an invitation to do something, go! "Finding a job is a lot like dating," says Carroll, who points out that half the battle is keeping yourself top-of-mind with other people, so when they hear of an opportunity, they think of you first. "The No. 1 way to find a job is through friends and family."

3. Create a project to give you the bullet points. Missing a few key skills/experiences from your resume? Come up with a project - like work for a non-profit, or a personal branding-related project - to give yourself the relevant bullet points. "Showing that you're proactive - that you are willing to get creative to achieve new things - is a great way to get the attention of recruiters and hiring managers," says Carroll.

4. Self-employment - aka 'contract work' - doesn't have to be scary. "We've been taught to think of the corporate job - with all the trimmings - as the only 'safe' option," says Carroll, "but the truth is that contract work can be just as steady - and often put more money on your bottom line. This is a good time to consider becoming an independent contractor."

5. Research the places you'd most like to work - and then connect to someone there. "Thanks to social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, it's easier than ever to connect with people who work at the companies you'd most like to work for," says Carroll. "And the most desirable companies are often the ones which are still hiring in this market - but generally on a quieter basis. Contacting someone to invite them for a 15-minute coffee 'informational' meeting is a great way to build relationships - and it's relationships which will ultimately help get you a job."

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Overall, Carroll is positive about employment prospects for Canadians. "Sure, the market is slower than it was a year ago," she acknowledges. "But companies are still hiring - it's just a matter of making sure you're the first one they think of when they do."

ABOUT HEAD2HEAD

Head2Head provides specialized recruiting services, including outsourced and insourced recruiting solutions, to more than 250 of Canada's leading organizations. Founded in Toronto in 2000, H2H has more than 35 employees, 120 consultants, and offices in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary.

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