

Competition For Jobs - Part I

Competition in the workforce is an important reality to face if you want to succeed in your job search. When two or more people are rivals, we have a basis for a contest and in this case the competition is to offer the most favorable terms or skills to the employer.

Competition is fierce among people applying for jobs. These days, employers are able to "pick and choose" who they want working for them. Competition has always been a fundamental part of our society, and sports are a prime example of its popularity.

However, competing in sports or at a game of chess is vastly different from engaging in the process of marketing and selling your skills to an employer. Make no mistake, you are in constant competition with others in your field, and at stake is your employability.

Those who rise to the challenge, who master the art of job searching and use their time efficiently will be able to go out and show the employer that they are the best person for the job !!!

Just like a traditional martial arts master, a job seeker must receive instruction and training in the art of job searching. Then enter the arena of the workforce, and compete with others for the opportunity to earn a living, contribute to society, and enjoy their lives. If they learn well, they will compete effectively, and attain their goals. But if they don't have the right information or don't have a realistic strategy they will need to work harder to find work.

What exactly makes a good competitor?

Let us examine hockey as an example. A good competitor in hockey is somebody who has good overall skills and is a great team player. Has a good attitude and leadership skills, is focused on the game and encourages his teammates a lot. Somebody who raises his game when needed and is a very intelligent player, combining a great vision of the play with a great sense of hockey. Obviously he must be a good passer and playmaker, and have a strong offensive awareness that makes him dangerous when controlling the puck deep in the zone. He should be able to find his linemates easily and create good scoring chances with his smart, no-nonsense passing and playmaking abilities.

As you can see, there are specific skills and qualities to a "good" competitor. His skills are not enough though, the competitive player has to also convince others of his skills, so that he will be draft-picked and paid a decent salary. Players must be comfortable with competition and being competitive with one another. Coming to grips with the reality of a competitive environment can generate fear and feelings of low self worth. It is not uncommon for people to want to flee a situation that brings them into direct conflict and competition with others, where they are judged for their worth, and must fight for opportunities.

Being a "good" player in the game of job searching requires dedication and courage to face competitors and win. To understand this further ponder these questions; How do you think you rate against other job seekers? Are you as successful as they are? Do they have secret techniques, or job search skills you don't have? Are their presentation skills better? Do they spend more time job searching than you do? Do you like being competitive? Why not? What ultimately makes you feel good about competing?

Other essential parts of being a "good" job search competitor are in analyzing and understanding the labour market and the "key-skills" needed to land a job. For instance knowing that 80% of jobs are not advertised in the newspaper or on the job bank would be a key piece of information for any job seeker. And, then knowing how to use informational interviews to expand your network of contacts is even more key to finding those hidden jobs.

Around the year 500 BC, the great Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, wrote a treatise on the Art of War. This work is still relevant today with advice to military commanders, businesses, and individuals on winning against competitors:

"If you are ignorant of both your enemy and yourself, then you are a fool and certain to be defeated in every battle. If you know yourself, but not your enemy, for every battle won, you will suffer a loss. If you know your enemy and yourself, you will win every battle."

Know who you are, and who you are competing against, because although Vancouver has boasted an unemployment rate lower than many other Canadian cities, there is tough competition for available jobs.

The most important steps to competing for jobs in BC is to: collect information about the labour market, learn how to write powerful resumes and cover letters, expand your network of contacts, and know the secret keys to managing and promoting your skills in a job interview. Converting the information you receive in these areas into intelligence and then developing a strategy that works is an essential part of participating in a job search.

Sounds very complicated, however, knowledge is power, and can make all the difference when time and money are at stake. Instead of applying for jobs in the newspaper that receive over 200 resumes, go for networking opportunities with industry professionals. Your odds of becoming employed can be dictated by how many other job seekers are applying for the same job. A 200:1 ratio is normal for newspaper job postings, and that is just to get an interview, let alone the job.

Learn to think outside the box, and to see opportunities where others see nothing.

Next week we will cover other aspects of competition for jobs, examining many of the statistics and opportunities that exist in BC, as well as the merits of attending programs that teach job search techniques.