

Competition For Jobs - Part II

This 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.

First, let us examine the BC economy. Like other areas of the Canadian economy, there has been a shift away from goods producing to service producing industries. Within the service sector there is a wide variety of occupations, ranging from professional occupations such as engineers and lawyers to traditional service sector jobs such as waiters and tour guides.

Job competition is a complex topic. Regular sports competitions usually have very clear goals and guidelines. The training is predictable and practice is a key factor. But job searching is more complicated.

There are far more factors effecting employment opportunities. Economics, demographics, globalization, increases in technology, industrial shifts, and shifts in employment status are just some of the trends that effect the labour market. The bottom line is that finding and keeping a job is relevant to how motivated you are, how well you market yourself, how well you network with people, how much you can offer an employer, how well you know your competition and labour market, and how much effort you devote to lifelong learning.

Each industry will have it's own statistics and competitions for jobs. Let us explore one of those competitive fields by looking at students in the tourism industry.

What kind of competition is there for students in the tourism industry?

During these summer months University students will be looking for work to pay next years tuition. With many taking seasonal service jobs competition is going to be tough for those "good" jobs. If you are a student you have to compete against fellow students, as well as against the mainstream workforce. This can be a difficult task, so be prepared to focus your energies and be persistent.

"The early bird gets the worm" is good advice for those students targeting the hospitality and tourism industry. Many jobs are not advertised due to the huge number of resumes that employers receive. This makes in-person employer contact extremely important. Employers need to hire and train people quickly, before the busy tourism season. Some new employees won't work out so be prepared to follow up with employers who have just hired. You never know when you will get a call for an interview.

Statistics are also important to understanding competition in the job market. The BC Lower Mainland unemployment rate fell to 6.2% in the first quarter of 2001. This figure doesn't really mean that much, because it is too general. 6.2% doesn't really take into

consideration the "ups" and "downs" that occur in each individual field. What we need to look at are the statistics for each industry, and then examine the odds of finding work based on the methods you are using.

I strongly suggest examining current unemployment statistics for your industry from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training. You can view the reports at:

www.aett.gov.bc.ca

By learning effective job search techniques and applying them the odds are more fair when looking for work. To give you an example of using information let us examine the Transportation and Warehousing field. Over that past year we have seen consistent unemployment in this area, with only slight rises early in 2001. With a 9.8% change down from last year, and over 108,900 people employed in this industry, our competition is approximately 10,000 strong. With a single ad in the newspaper usually receiving 200 resumes, we can imagine our odds:

10,000 -- job seekers

10 -- job postings

Ratio is 10,000:10 or 1,000:1. If 200 of those unemployed workers succeed in applying for 1 of those jobs then the "ratio to get the interview" (not the job) is 200:1. Your resume is competing with 200 other people, just for the interview. When narrowing it further through an interview process, the competitive ratio is much lower, sometimes 5:1. Your goal is to convince the employer that you are the right person, making it a 1:1 ratio. Another important fact is that these job postings only account for roughly 5% of the job market.

With 200: 1 odds employers have more power to choose the right candidate. Through competition they have the ability to hire somebody who is over qualified but pay them less than they are worth. In contrast to this, "networking" opportunities give job seekers access to the "hidden" job market, where approximately 80% of jobs exist and competition is less. Facts like these are commonly taught in job search workshops funded by the government. These job search programs help teach job seekers keys to successful ways to land a job.

Everybody thinks they can design a "good" resume, however that is far from the truth. Employers have the final say in whether a resume caters to their needs and Employment Counsellors consult them to find out what they expect from job seekers. From the way you dress, to how well you answer key interview questions, Employment Counsellors offer job seekers "expert" training and information on finding and keeping jobs.

Many people can do their taxes themselves, or heal their own wounds, but most would benefit from seeing a tax accountant or a family doctor. That is why consulting an Employment Counsellor should be on your list of things to do when job searching.