

Waiting Until the Virus Alert is Over To Start Job Hunting Will Prove To Be The Wrong Strategy

I was talking to a 58-year-old manager at Microsoft yesterday. I asked him if Microsoft is doing any hiring. He said, "I just hired two people. I've never met either of them in person. I did the interviewing online and decided that they were the right people to join the team. So I gave them job offers. One starts on Monday, and the other one starts next week."

Our conversation included what it's like for him now that he's working from home. I asked, "Are you busy?" He said, "Yeah, I am. I'm working more hours. I get up, and I'm on the computer at eight, and I'm staying on it until five or six. At the office, it's different. I do the same length of time, but the day isn't as productive as it is when I work from home. My days in the office used to be full of short stints talking to people, or getting a snack. Now, I'm not running to a meeting and then taking my time talking to people coming back. I'm not getting distracted by other things at home, as you do in the office. I'm working more hours now that I don't commute. I asked him if he cared about not being able to see the person that he was hiring. He replied, "I saw him online. Both have the skills we need, so I hired them." My last question was, "Are you the exception when it comes to hiring right now?" "No, I'm working on the cloud projects, and we are so swamped, and Microsoft as a company is actively hiring right now."

Are you currently sitting it out?

I have been talking to HR Directors and Career Counselors, and we are all hearing a lot of excuses as to why people have not started a job search in earnest. It's a mistake if you are sitting on the sidelines and not actively looking and applying for jobs right now. Here is what career counselors are hearing, and what the actual reality is.

Excuse #1 No one is hiring.

Reality: You're mistaken if you are thinking that not many employers are hiring. Last week I wrote an article outlining the Top 100 Employers with 550,000+ Jobs Available put together by Susan P. Joyce,

Excuse #2 Most of the jobs are low level.

Reality: Wrong again! I searched Indeed.com and typed in "MANAGER." I found 183,145 job openings looking for someone at the mid-level, and 26649 opportunities at the senior level. I then went to LinkedIn.com and searched "DIRECTOR," finding that 109,219 job openings were looking for midlevel, senior, and executive-level people.

Excuse # 3 My employer will be hiring me back.

Reality: The employer may have said that in the beginning, but it remains to be seen how many employers can afford to hire all their employees back. The recovery and reopening of America are going to begin with a very slow start. Maybe the top employees will get called in, yet many more won't. Most companies, nonprofits, and governmental agencies are bleeding red ink and have lost too much money to be able to rehire all their old employees again. And the sad fact is that many organizations will not reopen at all.

Excuse #4 I make more on unemployment with the extra \$600 so why work?

Reality: That benefit lasts eight weeks. Then it's gone. About the time you lose your additional \$600/week benefit, so will millions of other people. The job market will suddenly get clogged with the millions of job hunters who make this mistake. The competition will have become very steep. Landing a job will be much, much harder.

Excuse #5: My industry got disseminated by the virus, so there are no jobs.

Reality: If you are involved in the travel industry, aviation, aerospace, event planning, tourism, retail, restaurants – you are correct, these industries are in tough shape. It's going to be a long road as they struggle to survive. Many won't. The right strategy is to think about moving to a new industry. For example, take a look at the tech industry. Analyze your transferable skills. Employers highly value computer skills. Are you good at sales? You can certainly learn to sell a new product. Review what skills you can use in another field. And if you are lacking, go take a few classes

I've been through several lousy unemployment cycles in the past. A few happened quickly – like the financial crisis that started in 2008, and 9/11. In my 30 year career, this pandemic is unprecedented in that it devastated so many industries with 30 million people currently unemployed. It's tough times. But when you start to job hunt will have a significant impact on your success. Savvy job hunters should be actively job hunting right now. Those two people starting at Microsoft aren't just lucky. They were actively seeking a new job. So begin today. Network! Make sure your resume is persuasive showing your top skills and the results you have achieved. Update your LinkedIn Profile because recruiters are still combing LinkedIn looking for talent to hire, and you don't want these employers to miss finding you.

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