Trouver un job en temps de crise: Stratégies et tactiques

Avertissement à nos lecteurs

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Here is a list of suggestions/recommendations from IE/MBA participants.

These strategies are suggested to be implemented in a time of crisis when job hunters approach and negotiate with staff in organizations who happen to be:

- pessimistic and often irritable;
- anxious;
- looking for a “quick fix” to address their “burning issues”;
- short on time;
- looking for non-traditional solutions to their issues (since traditional ones have proven to be unsuccessful);
- focused on short term goals; i.e.: must “save the boat from sinking” (increase sales, decrease costs, avoid errors dramatically);
- reducing long term decisions from 2 to 3 years to 2 to 3 months;
- worried about saving their own jobs;
- …/…

…But they still NEED YOU VERY BADLY to help them survive NOW and then THRIVE TOMORROW!

On the following pages we have listed all suggestions made to find a job during a time of crisis, however, some of these suggestions are not specifically to be used in a time of crisis only - they will work at any time! We have printed in bold those ideas that seem to be the most appropriable and/or efficient in a time of crisis.

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1 SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Build realistic expectations
- Define your life objectives and goal
- Discover your competencies / specific skills for specific target jobs to focus on your best skills
- Discover your skills by asking people (peers, friends, mentors, ex-bosses...)
- Emphasize examples of revenue generation
- Focus on your priorities to find a nice job
- Gather information to build confidence and make an impact
- Identify skills that have helped your company achieve in previous tough situations
- Inquire about intermediate jobs just under the destination job that is in demand
- Investigate trends so that you know which industries are more difficult to get into
- Know yourself (skills, strengths and weaknesses)
- Make clear your passion to form it on a job

2 TARGETING

- Adjust the approach to the way the industry is reacting to the crisis
- Enlarge the scope of the search to simlar companies or jobs
- Follow up the companies in different ways (internet, contacts, media) to recognize trends and opportunities
- Go for industries that still function in time of crisis
- Identify growth areas, (e.g.: mobile applications, energy markets, that are still growing)
- Identify the job you dream to get
- Identify what you like to do in your spare time
- Keep in touch with your shool colleagues
- Research companies or segments that do well in a downturn (e.g.: insolvent pratices)
- Research what companies have been hiring and for which roles, (e.g.. last year's job placements)
- Talk to head-hunters or peers, they may help you identify what kind of jobs fit your skills
- Think long-term because after crisis the job market might boom

3 JOB HUNTING

3.1 Before the interview

3.1.1 Open Market

- Create a video or something innovative and unusual to use in place of a CV.
- Develop a creative CV that stands out.
- Find stable industries.
- Focus on your job search.
- Follow companies closely to understand the major issues they face, and come up with some solutions.
- **Identify the person who placed the ad and approach them directly.**
- **Put more effort in your application based on the company's profile. Conduct thorough research. Tailor your CV to their needs, incorporating key words.**
- **Reduce the number of target companies and focus on the ones you consider more capable of surviving the crisis.**
- Turn to "hidden market" opportunities. Go visit people rather than write or phone them.

3.1.2 Hidden Market

- Ask others to refer you (this is a better bet during a time of crisis than the open market).
- Contact specialized outplacement companies.
- **Create and build your networks. Identify target individuals and establish a relationship with them. Seek individuals to meet with and have an introductory conversation about the job.**
- Develop your network through your peers to target companies that are trying to expand, even in a time of crisis.
- Discover someone to talk with within the company/department that you are targeting.
- Find and establish more contacts so you can broaden opportunities.
- Give and receive honest feedback.
- **Identify companies that are expanding/growing and target them (e.g.: stay current with the news).**
- Increase your reliance on the hidden market. Use your network to help you navigate it.
- Maximize use of your connection to your professors.
- Reach people who can give you the job directly.

3.1.3 Opaque Market

- **Be active and stay current on building your personal brand (share relevant articles and info on LinkedIn).**
- Differentiate your profile on the web to get attention.
- Email your documents (e.g.: CV) through your networks.
- Emphasize keywords in social/professional networks.
- **Improve your profile, keep it upbeat, connect to groups you are interested in and seek recommendations. Continuously build and grow your network.**
- Send a link to your profile to specific targeted companies.
- Use 2nd level contacts. Go and approach them with a solution.

3.1.4 Networking

- Attend events and meet with targeted individuals. Ask these people to connect you to 3 others in the same area of work. Use direct connections, or second level connections.
- **Join interest groups, which can give your interviewers common ground to begin discussions.**
- **Modify your LinkedIn keywords to include words more related to characteristics which can deal with the crisis (e.g., innovative person, creative person, positive attitude…).**
- Request specific references/comments on LinkedIn to prove your talent.

3.1.5 Written Documents

- **Be brief, direct and to the point to avoid wasting the time of your reader.**
- Be short, concise, clear and attention grabbing. Your goal is to spark the curiosity of the reader in order for them to become interested in speaking with you personally.
- Bring up issues that are current and the contribution you can make to help with these issues.
- Customize your CV and cover letters. Be creative. Use paper of good quality. Consider using a different color ink to stand out (i.e. green).

- Emphasize your differentiating factors and how you can contribute; do something different (e.g.: portfolio instead of CV).
- Have a positive attitude.
- Offer a “White Paper” report.
- Present previous working experiences.
- **Sell yourself with more crisis-related skills.**
- **Send a “road map” in advance of the actions you foresee taking in your new role.**
- Send a written letter to your potential boss expressing your interest in the job.
- **Update and tailor written documents to match each job description.**

3.1.6 Telephone

- Approach people you trust, respect and love to get feedback/advice on your strengths and weaknesses.
- **Call in advance to ask questions about the job.**
- Call people in the field to ask questions about the job (sometimes people tend to give more information by phone).
- **Develop a short list of questions to ask that will stay in the interviewer’s mind.**
- Do cold calls with HR staff (not the Director of HR).
- Follow up after submitting documents.
- Make sure to answer only what you have been asked. Do not answer questions that have not been asked.
- Prepare for telephone interviews and give relevant answers to questions.
- Show enthusiasm and a positive attitude for the new job.
- **Smile. Use a friendly tone of voice. Get to the point.**
- Stand up, dress up, smile, prepare in advance as you would for any other interview.
- Structure and prioritize the information about yourself to keep things brief.

3.1.7 Networking/Social Networks

- Ask your contacts to present you to others at a dinner or cocktail reception/bar. Never over indulge.
- Ask your peers to see if anyone they know works or has worked in your field of choice.
- Attend networking events and job fairs and give out your business card.
- Be selective about whom you contact in your networking activities.
- Create a webpage/blog to market yourself.
- Create rapport. Find shared interests. Send follow-up letters to keep momentum going.
- Email organizers of events in advance so they will know you when you meet them. Show them your enthusiasm and energy.
- Figure out which sectors and fields are downsizing and avoid those sectors when possible.
- Go to where people spend time for leisure (e.g.: sports, clubs...).
- **Prepare in advance relevant questions to ask, especially when you have limited time with others.**
- Use Linkedin and ask to be presented to your contacts. Find the one person who interests you the most and ask for a personal meeting through the service provided on the website.
- Wear something professional to events, but still show your unique style.

3.1.8 Job targets

- Approach companies that, despite the crisis, are still growing.
- Do not look at where you want to be in 10 years, but be focused on now so you can narrow down your core targets (matching your ultimate skills).
- Find a position that can grow into your dream job when the crisis is past.
- **Go to industry/field open fairs, and events to identify and meet the right people.**
- Have a Plan B. Do not get stuck or focused on one specific area or company.
- Look for innovative and flexible jobs, often common in a lean organization, which may cope better during a crisis.
- Match your priorities to the jobs that you want (review your values, strengths, weaknesses, interests…).
- Narrow down your options and be specific about which companies you want to approach.
- Target companies that are continuing to experience growth.
- **Target high potential positions and do as many internship projects as you possibly can.**
- **Think about underserved jobs/positions where they still need people, even during a crisis.**

3.1.9 Preparation

- **Anticipate possible solutions for the company in terms of alternative ways to save money (or not lose revenue).**
- Be prepared and aware of trends and look at current needs. Check out their financials and compare them to previous years (when they were not in crisis). Identify your value and how you can contribute to the company.
- Commit more time on gathering information on industries, companies, and positions.
- Demonstrate that you are the right person for them.
- Discover more about the company, and its current situation.
- Find a few “trivia” facts about companies, as they often prove interesting.
- Gather information about the background and previous experience of the interviewer.
- Get a good night’s sleep.
- Identify what your role within company would be and what projects you might do.
- **Know the company culture well.**
- Look at the positive side of the crisis and stress the up-side to the employer.
- **Prepare in advance by predicting and practicing typical questions that might be asked. Try to answer them in a different way than most candidates.**
- Show effort/do more than expected (e.g.: bring a collection of newspaper articles about the company, so that the interviewer can see your effort).
- Speak with as many people as you can who work/worked for the company.
- **Take more time to prepare because there is more competition.**
- **Think about how companies/functions have changed due to the crisis (increasing cost focus, restructuring tasks) and how you would bring relevant expertise to help move the company out of the crisis.**
- **Use your network to understand the problems and current industry trends related to your target job.**

3.2 During the interview

3.2.1 Attitude/Style

- **Ask questions about how they are turning the current bad situation into a positive one.**
- Avoid begging for a job, but do ask for it.
- Be humble, willing, energetic, positive, natural and confident.
- Be passionate and positive, showing you will not create further problems at the company.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer to gain insights into his/her personality.
- **Present yourself as a resource/possible change agent.**
- Project yourself as what you want to be, not what you are right now.
- Show confidence and be honest.
- Show you are trustworthy and in for the long term possibilities.
- Show your motivation to help them through the crisis.
- Suggest you would be willing to work for free for a short period to prove yourself.
- Take initiative and ask about the company early in the interview.
- Wear professional attire. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed. First impressions count.

3.2.2 Tasks/Missions

- **Acknowledge the crisis and ask how their priorities have changed from 'normal' times.**
- **Ask about the priorities of the job, especially what "crisis solving skills" they are looking for.**
- Describe how you will add value to the employer/company.
- Describe previous tasks you have carried out and ask about expected tasks.
- Discuss your strategies for the "small fixes" that are necessary before the harder problems can be tackled.
- Give concrete examples of your strengths during difficult times.
- Inquire about the interviewer.
- Know the mission statement and understand the job description well. Line up your skills with those tasks. Highlight them with facts and figures.
- Select the least "popular" topic to discuss, which may allow your interview to take an unexplored path during the interview. This will prove memorable to him/her later.
- Show your interest in the job by asking specific questions and then listen to their answers.
- Tell good stories.
- Think more out of the box - try a digital CV, YouTube video… maximize your tools to be remembered.
- Understand the results the company requires during a crisis situation.

3.2.3 Pitch

- Be efficient. Keep your answers brief.
- Deliver your pitch in 20 seconds (unique characteristics about yourself that relate to the job). Allow them to ask for more information and then give them the 120 second pitch.
- Figure out a way to show your uniqueness, but be genuine.
- Mention extracurricular activities.

- Prepare it in advance. Practice in front of the mirror. Ask for others to watch and provide feedback. Tape yourself so you are comfortable reciting your pitch. Foresee which questions are likely to be asked and prepare original answers.
- Remember that “Less is more” and time is limited. Be succinct and powerful.
- Show that you are accurate and empathic, and oriented to the company’s goals.

3.2.4 Salary

- Accept a lower salary and negotiate a bonus for objectives.
- Acknowledge the difficult times.
- Avoid salary negotiation if you can, especially in the beginning stages of the interviewing process. Don't talk of salary until absolutely necessary.
- Be open to the possibility of being awarded performance-related pay (first choice), stock options (second choice) to show you believe you can navigate the crisis and are making a long-term commitment to them.
- Be realistic. Know your market value.
- Inquire about the evaluation process (possible times/reasons for promotion).
- Justify why you deserve a higher salary.
- Mention a range. Do not give a specific figure.
- Offer to accept fringe benefits or performance based bonuses in place of salary, if you have to negotiate on terms.
- Say yes to the first offer if you really want the job but you must later demonstrate you can be more valuable and earn more.
- Take cost pressure into account when negotiating salary. Clarify the lowest acceptance level early on to make sure you can continue with the negotiation.

3.2.5 Type of contract

- Accept a shorter contract if necessary to get your foot in the door.
- Ask for a 3 to 6 month contract.
- Be open to a 6 month contract (giving the company more flexibility to bring you on board) and demonstrate you can produce results from the very beginning. Ask for a re-evaluation after the 6 months is up.
- Look for, at least, one longer term contract (not temporary…).
- Work for 3 months with the understanding that you will be paid based on your performance, with a permanent salary/contract negotiated at that point.

3.3 After the interview

- Call after the interview to ask for additional clarification on the job or tasks. Ask for feedback. Do not talk over 7 minutes.
- Follow up with a letter or email, addressing key points from the interview. Mention some relevant information if you can.
- Maintain contact, even if you don’t get the job.
- Prepare a list of follow-up questions and further ideas which come to you after you have reflected on the interview. Try to have contact with the interviewer again so you will be in his/her mind during the selection process.
- Send a “Thank you” note or card to the interviewer.
- Thank the interview for the time spent and confirm your enthusiasm and passion about the company in your note.