

PM WORLD TODAY – PM ADVISORY – JANUARY 2011

How to Debunk the “No One’s Hiring” Myth: The Five O’Clock Club Offers Twelve Proven Methods to Help You Land — Yes! — a Job

Looking for a job right now feels overwhelming. But companies are hiring, and, if you do the right things, one will hire you. It’s time to apply some (proven, research-based) methodology to your job search madness.

By Kate Wendleton

Today’s job market is not for the faint of heart. Unemployment seems stuck at just over 9 percent, so whether you’re laid off and looking or simply desperate to get out of a dead end job, you’ve got a lot of competition. And if you’ve just emailed your résumé in response to yet another Craigslist or Monster.com job posting, take a deep breath and back away from the keyboard. I have some good news and some bad news.

First the bad news: You’re doing it wrong. When you answer a posted ad, you’re competing with hundreds, even thousands, of other job applicants. (Not good odds!)

Now for the good (no, GREAT!) news: People are getting hired, even in this dismal job market. In fact, Five O’Clock Club members who command a \$200,000+ pay rate are getting jobs in less than six months. Across the board, Club members are getting multiple offers, and professionals are typically landing a job in only twelve weeks.

If you’re using the right techniques, you will almost certainly find a job. But online searches and job posts are a very, very small part of the equation.

The Five O’Clock Club, the nation’s premier career coaching and outplacement network, has developed its own methodology based on twenty-five years of research it’s conducted. And—good news for weary job hunters—you don’t have to be a card-holding member to benefit from the Club’s expertise and experience. Its website—www.fiveoclockclub.com—provides hundreds of free articles and audio recordings on job searching and career development. There’s even a free weekly newsletter.

There are so many directions to go in when you start a job search that it often overwhelms people into inaction. Our methodology helps job hunters bring structure to a process that seems random. It’s very comforting—and it works.

If you’re looking to take that next step, read on for a few suggestions pulled from Five O’Clock Club methodology:

Don't jump in without a plan. Most job hunters feel like they have to find a new job...*yesterday*. And while, admittedly, sooner is better than later, Five O'Clock methodology stresses the importance of first taking the time to do the necessary planning. Its job hunters must go through an assessment in which they answer important questions like: *What kind of job do you want? Where do you want to work? Where do you see yourself in five, ten, fifteen years?* They help people realize exactly what they want and ultimately lead to quicker searches.

All of our job hunters have to go through the assessment. We don't accept, "I don't have time for that" as an excuse. Think of it this way: If you have an important project to complete for work, the project will go more smoothly and have a better result if you do the proper planning ahead of time. The same is true of job hunting.

Don't just say, "I'll do anything and everything. Whatever job I can get, I'll take it." First of all, nobody wants to hire anyone who is willing to do anything. You won't be valuable to that employer, and they won't think you will be truly committed to them. You have to set targets for what you want to do and where you want to work. You set those targets through your assessment. It is a critical step in every job search.

It's not about what you can do. It's about what you really, truly want to do. Many traditional outplacement services analyze the personalities of their job hunters, they analyze their skills, and then they let them start searching. These services are doing their clients a great, well, *disservice*.

If you are analyzing only a job hunter's personality and job skills, then he'll be stuck in the same accounting job he had before he was fired or before he decided to leave his employer—it will just be at a different company. People need to envision what they would like to be doing fifteen years from now. They need to think about how their job decisions will affect their spouses and families.

That's why we take a whole-person approach at The Five O'Clock Club and make envisioning one's future a key part of the assessment process. In fact, this step is so useful that 58 percent of the Club members who go through it decide to change careers and target a completely new field or industry than the one they were in before.

Set targets—and keep them in your sights. You have to set targets for what you want to do and where you want to work. Basically, this means narrowing down the industries you want to work in, the positions you want to hold, the geographic areas you're willing to move to, and so forth. Five O'Clock Club members set targets as part of their assessments. From then on, they frequently hear the statement, "If your targets are wrong, your search is wrong."

Targets are essential because they help drive your search. They take a process that can be overwhelming and give you a course to follow. If you find out that a certain target is not working for you, then you can simply go after the next one. Once you have identified your targets, The Five O’Clock Club urges you to go many places, meet many people, and ask many questions.

Remember, there’s no DIY in “job search.” The big fad for many outplacement services these days is to do everything online. They use webinars and other e-learning opportunities. They can offer long packages to their clients because they don’t require space or labor. Unfortunately, they leave job hunters without the one-on-one coaching that is necessary to keep them positive and on track.

The Five O’Clock Club, on the other hand, offers its clients both private coaching and small group coaching. In fact, it’s the only career program in which members meet with professional coaches and peers on a weekly basis in a friendly, club-type format.

Job hunters need feedback. They need to work with people who can get to know them, give them advice on how to improve their résumés and cover letters, set them straight when they’re off track, and hold them accountable. Let’s face it: If you know you’re going to have to report on what you’ve done—and what you *haven’t* done—you’re much more likely to stay on the straight and narrow.

People who attend our small groups get jobs faster, at higher rates of pay, and that are more satisfying than those who see only a private coach.

Seek out coaching groups that consist of both unemployed and employed job hunters. That’s how Five O’Clock groups operate. The reason is two-fold.

One, it is depressing for unemployed job hunters to hear only from other unemployed job hunters. They end up sitting around talking about how they were fired, and no one benefits from that. The people who are unemployed get hope from the employed people. They see that Frank or Susan has a job, and know that they will have a job soon too.

Reason two, the employed members are crunched for time. They want to come to the group, say, “Here’s what I’m doing,” and get feedback from the group. They keep things moving forward and help everyone get the advice they need efficiently and effectively.

Don’t fall prey to the “a coach is a coach is a coach” mentality. All career coaches are not created equal. A coach may have ten or twenty years of career coaching experience, but if he or she is not using a proven methodology, all those years of experience might be a detriment, not an asset. If someone wants to coach for The Five O’Clock Club, he must go through a grueling, four-month certification program to unlearn what he *thinks* he knows based on his own experience.

Our coaches can analyze any person's search in five minutes. First, they want to know how much time a job hunter is spending on her search. Then, they want to know what her targets are. If the person doesn't have targets that add up to 200 positions—not job openings, but possible positions in her area—then the person hasn't really started her search.

They can analyze and improve job hunter résumés and cover letters. They help job hunters identify six to ten search tactics that work for them at any one time. Bottom line, they help job hunters be productive and keep them moving forward in a process that can be extremely tedious and disheartening at times.

“Card” yourself. Every Five O'Clock Clubber has a special 3x5 index card that holds the personalized keys to their job hunting success. It helps them narrow down and stay focused on their most important “talking points.” You can create one for yourself, too. First, your card will include the short pitch about yourself to use when you meet a new contact, in interviews, or at other events or meetings.

Here's an example: *I am a marketing manager with twelve years of international experience. In my recent job, I was able to grow revenue by 20 percent in a very bad market. The reason I am looking for a job right now is that the company I work for has decided it doesn't want to be international anymore. I am talking to you because I can see that you are very interested in growing internationally.*

Your card should also include three or four of your personal accomplishments. You want to know these like the back of your hand in case you are ever asked an off-the-wall question in an interview or meeting. Let's say an interviewer asks you how good your tennis game is. Drawing from your card, you might say: “I don't know about my tennis game, but at my last job I felt like I was really hitting the ball around. One thing I did was help our sales department increase sales by X percent.”

And finally, your card should include the one question you are most afraid they are going to ask you along with your answer. Let's say your most dreaded question is *Why are you looking?* You might say, “I'm looking for a new job because I was caught in a downsizing like so many others in this market.” Or let's say the question is *Why didn't you finish college?* Whatever you do, *don't* say, “My mother died and I had to help out,” or, “I couldn't decide on a major.” The interviewer is not interested in you and your mother. Instead say, “I was eager to work and contribute and that's the kind of person you would get if you hired me: someone who is eager to work and contribute!”

Shape your own interview. The unfortunate reality is that managers who are hiring don't always ask the right questions. When this is the case, as the job hunter, you have to figure out a way to get your strengths and accomplishments into the interview. (Remember the tennis game example?) This is when it is a great time to recall all of the

great accomplishments you have on your index card and use them to keep the interview moving forward.

You might expect the person interviewing you to prepare just as much as you did for the interview. But that rarely happens. When this is the case, you don't have to surrender to her poor preparation. You can revive the situation by creating your own interview. Use the information on your index card to keep the conversation flowing, and keep it flowing in a direction that works to your advantage.

Network with the big dogs. One of the problems with the way people network is that they just talk to everyone they know. Unfortunately, everyone they know is in the same field or the same age group as them. More often than not, they are peers. They might know about jobs at their companies, but they might not have the authority to recommend you to the hiring manager. Or they might be able to put you only in positions that represent a lateral move and won't help you advance your career.

We talk to people all the time who say they've been networking for a year and have met a hundred people. Well, unfortunately, they were the wrong hundred people. Networking that counts happens when you are contacting people who are one or two levels higher than you are. You're not going to get a job until you talk to the right people who are more senior than you and who will think of you when there is an opening at their company.

If an interviewer doesn't "bite," don't toss him back in the water. In other words, don't just discard someone who tells you his company has no openings. If a person is at the right level and at the right company, he is just as valuable to you as someone with an opening. That's because you can ask him this important question: *If you were hiring right now, would you hire someone like me?*

Because there is no opening, the contact is more likely to be honest with you. He might say, "Well, no, because you don't have experience in the X or Y segment of what we do here." If you are getting similar feedback from other senior-level contacts, then you will know that you need to adjust your targets or that you aren't positioning yourself correctly.

Don't be afraid to be a "pest." Follow up, follow up, and follow up again. After you interview with a company or meet with a senior-level contact, that isn't the end of the road. You need to spend just as much time developing that relationship after you've met with her as you did prior to the meeting. You have to follow up...repeatedly.

Think about it this way. Say there's a kid who wants to get his first job and he goes to his local grocery store. The first week they tell him they aren't hiring. So he goes back the next week and then the next. Finally, the manager agrees to hire him. The same general idea holds true for senior-level people and big companies.

Not only does the follow-up phase keep you in front of them, it also helps you find out where you stand. You can find out what your competition looks like, how many other people they are talking to, etc. This information will help in the salary negotiation phase if they do decide to hire you. For example, if you know you had a lot of competition for the job, then you will know you can be easily replaced, and you will have little room for salary negotiations. But if they tell you, “We want you and no one else”—and yes, this does happen!—that gives you a lot of wiggle room.

If you get an offer, don’t assume you’re home free. Aim to have three concurrent offers in the works at any one time. These offers don’t have to be jobs that you actually want to take, but having them in the works prevents you from slowing your search when you think you are about to get hired. It also gives you a psychological edge—the fact is, if you have only one thing in the works, the interviewer can tell.

What usually happens for a job hunter with only one opportunity in the works is he keeps asking the hiring company about progress, and they tell him they haven’t come to a decision. Well, if you have other offers, even if they are offers you know you won’t take, you can tell them that you have three offers on the table, but theirs is the job you *really* want. If they want you, you can push them to make a decision. Having multiple offers also helps keep you positive. It helps you keep your momentum going.

By the way: If you don’t have multiple things in the works, don’t lie and say that you do. Nine times out of ten you will not be able to keep up with what you told to whom. You’ll be found out, and it won’t do anything but hurt you in the long run.

If there’s one overarching piece of advice to remember, it’s simply this: Don’t sell yourself short.

You’re not just looking for “a job.” You’re taking the next step in developing and shaping your career. Your skills are valuable. You do have something to offer. And somewhere out there is a company that wants and needs that something. You owe it to yourself to do what it takes to find them.

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Kate Wendleton is president of The Five O’Clock Club and is an authority on job searching and career development. She has appeared on the *Today* show, CNN, CNBC, *Larry King Live*, National Public Radio, and CBS, as well as in the *Economist*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune* magazine, *BusinessWeek*, and other national media.

The Five O’Clock Club is a national outplacement and career coaching organization with certified career coaches across the United States. It is the only organization that uses a proven methodology—based on 25 years of research—to help members develop their careers or find new employment that’s right for them. Some 100,000 people have used the Club’s techniques and coaching. Its search process is quick and intense: The average Five O’Clock Clubber who receives regular career coaching finds a new job within just 10 to 12 weeks, as opposed to 8.1 months for the professional/managerial/executive population at large. The Five O’Clock Club is the only organization of its kind that produces its own books, CDs, and other learning tools based on research, rather than relying on the “vanilla” approach of its competitors. Its website, www.fiveoclockclub.com, provides hundreds of free articles and audio recordings on the subjects of job searching and career development.

For more information, please visit www.fiveoclockclub.com.