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Shave time off your job search

By NORINE DAGLIANO

RECENTLY, I was speaking with a client who is finishing her bachelor's degree and preparing to begin her job search. I asked her what she was looking for and she replied, "Something in finance."

This reply is a little like telling a friend you are going shopping and when asked, "For what?" you reply, "Something from a store."

Is it any wonder it takes some jobseekers months to land a job?

I love to shop, and on some days, I do it just to escape and wallow away the hours. I refer to this as "wandering aimlessly".

But my husband hates to shop, so when he does, he knows exactly what he wants and which stores carry it. He's a man with a clear goal and detailed vision of the item he is intent on buying. My husband is a "smart shopper".

Successful jobseekers follow the same approach. In the one hour of coaching time that I set aside for my client, my goal was to turn her into a "smart shopper".

First, we needed to drill down to the specific aspects of finance that appealed to her. Collections? Payroll? Taxes? Auditing? "Benefits," she replied with enthusiasm.

Next, I asked her to tell me how she sees herself spending her day; what tasks does she see herself performing. She stated the following: Reviewing forms and data, maintaining spreadsheets, talking with employees, reviewing eligibility



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guidelines, making calls to gather information, and solving employee problems. Now, I was getting a better picture. Maybe she was looking for work as a benefits administrator in an HR office? Next, I asked her to describe the company. What do they do, who are their customers?

She said that she likes the idea of working for a company that "helps

people". A human resources department of a large company might be the place to "shop" for the type of work she sees herself doing, but she had something else in mind.

With a little prodding on my part, she concluded that she really liked the idea of working for an organisation that provides financial support (benefits) to people in

need. "Like the social services department or unemployment office," she said.

The picture was getting even clearer for me now; maybe she is looking for a position as an intake counsellor or eligibility specialist for a service or government agency? Next, we needed to clarify how far she was willing to travel to "do her shopping". She identi-

fied a 40km-80km radius from her home. "So, what service or government agencies are within a 40km-80km radius of your home?" I asked.

She quickly began ticking off names: Department of Social Services, Social Security Administration Office, City Housing Authority, County Health Department. Within minutes, she had listed 15 places to "shop".

Our hour was about up, so I asked her again, "What are you looking for?" She replied differently this time: "I'd like something with a service or government agency where I'm meeting one-on-one with clients to assess their needs, determining their qualifications for specific service benefits, and helping them fill out their claims. I also see myself filing claims, inputting and tracking claims information on spreadsheets, and making follow-up calls to resolve problems. I'm targeting agencies within a 40km-48km radius of Clinton, North Carolina." Searching by job title was not the best approach. On the other hand, searching by company type, location and desired job functions/responsibilities makes "shopping" for a job much easier.

In less than an hour, she went from "wandering aimlessly" to being a smart shopper.

Any jobseeker can make this transition and when they do, opportunities will start appearing where they never thought to look. — www.careerealism.com