

Navigating the Sunday Classifieds **By Randy Howard**

Do you want to know how much job-seeking has changed? You can now apply for a sales position in Singapore - in five minutes - simply by sending your resume electronically. If you're not interested in traveling half way around the world for work, then try the Sunday edition of your local newspaper. Still an effective vehicle for finding employment, the classified section contains hundreds of local opportunities. Following are a few guidelines that will help you "cash in" on employment opportunities printed in the Sunday paper.

Maintain A Practical Focus

Don't let your present situation create a "sense of urgency" when navigating the classifieds. Doing this may cause you to pursue jobs for which your qualifications don't match; or, perhaps the job you've chosen in "panic mode" simply isn't a good fit. Maintaining a practical focus is important and will allow you to preserve your time and energy to follow up on the jobs you really want. Before you begin, remind yourself that you are only looking for opportunities where you can apply the skills and knowledge you've acquired. Being honest with yourself will usually dictate the types of jobs for which you apply.

Be Thorough

Never assume the job you're seeking will be listed under a specific section in "Help Wanted" -- some jobs warrant listings in two or more sections. For example, a medical sales position may be listed under "Sales", "Professional", or "Medical". All of these categories apply. There are instances when an ad will be listed under an incorrect heading. They say the devil is in the details, and only by conducting a thorough search will you prevent potential opportunities from slipping through the cracks.

Create A System

This is your chance to let your hair down, go back to school and take Art 101! Everyone has his/her own means of creating systems to stay organized. Transparent tape, scissors, paper, a pen or pencil and a little creativity is all you need. Simply cut out and tape each classified by the left margin on a blank sheet of paper. Leave the right side blank, as you must document the required follow-up (e.g. date resume and cover letter were sent). In maintaining a detailed account of each ad, you minimize the risk of seeming careless and forgetful when that prospective employer calls. Many newspapers also have corresponding web sites. Searching the classifieds on-line not only expedites the process, adding jobs to a shopping cart is another way of staying organized.

Vague Ads

Some companies simply list their name with a web site address, fax number or a simple message. Unorthodox as it may seem, this is not necessarily a bad sign. As part of their public relations efforts, established companies often run ads continually to keep their name and image out, in addition to recruiting quality individuals. Whether they are "wishing you a nice day" or qualifying themselves as an equal opportunity employer, don't count them out until you've investigated all potential opportunities.

Ads That Exaggerate and Mislead

"Earn \$1,000 While You Sleep!" Generally speaking, employers don't push the envelope this far, however, it is in their best interest to entice the best of the bunch. What is printed isn't always the reality of the situation, and using your better judgment will alert you to these types of positions. For example, if the "earning potential" is listed at \$100,000, it is safe to assume this is the exception, not the rule. An ad which claims you can "start today" probably doesn't require the skill, nor offer the compensation you deserve. "Smile Your Way to Success". If this were the only job requirement, the entire work force would make an appointment with its dentist tomorrow.

Be On the Lookout

Just when you thought it was safe to venture out into the workforce, they hit you where it hurts: your checkbook. While there are legitimate opportunities, which may or may not require an investment on your part, the truth of the matter is they rarely tell you up front. The investment is usually for training and/or certification, and employers like to assess the best candidates before they ask for money. In pursuing a position where an initial investment is required, be sure you have weighed your options -- many times the money is non-refundable. Also, be aware of multi-level marketing (MLM) opportunities. MLM ads are often vague and flowery ("Learn to Fly"), and these sales positions usually don't provide base salaries. One way to determine if you are calling on a multi-level marketing company is by listening closely to the person conducting the initial phone interview: he/she will often read from a script; he/she will avoid providing any detailed information about the job requirements; he/she will emphasize the rewards of commission-only sales.

Enjoy the Sunday Paper!

Pouring over hundreds of ads can be both intimidating and exhausting. Allow yourself ample time to complete the task. Take a break if you have to - go for a walk, attend church or have brunch with your friends. Remember, the classified section does not comprise the entire Sunday paper; there are plenty feature articles, coupons, comics and other special sections for you to enjoy. There is an element of stress involved with a new job search, but perhaps the Sunday paper will provide some relief. And if the song rings true, you'll be feeling "Easy, like Sunday morning."

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