

by Allen Anderson

Job Development Techniques in a Recession

In a recession, or in any labour market where the largest number or most of the jobs are in the hidden job market (like in a smaller rural community), it is necessary to plan a series of methods to make contact with employers and find the hidden jobs. Often job development relies on the open job market—the jobs listed in the newspaper and other advertising methods, asking if someone is hiring, or using existing employer relationships to find opportunities. With the recession pushing the open job market underground and employers not responding to open requests for identifying themselves as hiring, we need to expand into different contact methods.

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The First Method—The Relationship First

The first method that works well in prepping for a recession, or working in a rural setting, is reversing the standard equation and asking for the relationship first and the job later (sometimes much later). We spend our initial time in the job market getting to know employers through their business needs, not educating them about our services or getting them to hire a candidate. We just want the relationship. This means the getting to know phase is about understanding the employer, not getting them to understand us.

The getting-to-know-the-employer focus works best where the employer's management team does not turn over very often. Once you get to know the employer, they are still around for a while so you have time to work the relationship. If management is continually coming and going, it is better to just ask about the job and work the relationship through filling a job. Working the relationship first and the job opportunity second builds the best long-term business, but it is slower than the job first, relationship-building after the job has been found. Relationship building is a powerful, loyalty generating means by which to connect to employers, making you a trusted source before you even supply the candidate. This is why it works well in rural environments.

What Do We Say?

With the relationship first strategy, you need a reason for getting to know the employer to use as your opening line to request a meeting. "We would like to get to know you so we can see if there is some business we can do with you" is an okay generic opening line, but probably not strong enough in recessionary times. A better line would be something like: "We are trying to build an effective employment program to help out employers in these tough (recessionary) times. We know that we need to get to know local employers employment needs first. I am wondering if I can meet with you to discuss your hiring needs and issues and use that to help me build my employment program"?



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Or one with a slightly different spin: “We know that times are tough for all employers and we want to learn about local employer employment needs to see if there is anything we can build or target that might help everyone involved. I was wondering if you would spend 45 minutes with me discussing your needs, to give me some directions to work from. I will let you see the results so you can comment on the program I build.”

What To Ask For?

The next step after the employer agrees to see you is to ask about their employment needs, present and future. There is no discussion of what you have to offer as we assume that at this point that has not been fully developed. The position has to be one of getting to know the employer and not the position of informing the employer about your program or your candidates. You may get job offers while in this process of getting to know the employer but this should be seen as a bonus.

This is why we don't use an education mindset, which sees itself as transferring information to the employer in the form of an education. We are not there to transfer information to the employer, but rather to collect it from the employer. Relationships initially are better build because you listen rather than you talk.

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After you gather the employer information you schedule a return visit to outline your adjusted program. You make links between the information gathered and adjustments to your program on the return visit. You will have built a relationship that you earned you the right to present candidates when someone effective arises. . At this point you are unlikely to be rebuffed by the employer as the employer knows you know them and will see the candidate offer as an offer working in their best interest. It will also prompt them to call you when positions open and you become part of their hidden job market and referral to other jobs network.

Indirect Outreach

You can also set up a more indirect out reach system by sending out a newsletter (regular mail or email), highlighting several candidates that may interest your employers. . With more contact, stronger employer relationships are built, which will produce jobs over all times.



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Public Speaking—Useful Tool in a Recession

The second relationship building technique good in recessionary times is public speaking. Presentation to any group of adults (not necessarily identified employer groups) will connect you to employers or people who know employers. With public presentations, you can use one of two approaches.

One, you can say, “We want to help our community and our local employers and we have resources to do so. We are not sure what we could do to be the most help. Our solution will need to make use of the labor force we represent. I would like to ask anyone who has any ideas to discuss these with us. We will entertain any ideas about job openings, new jobs that could be created or support in hiring to local employers. Let me explain some of the solutions we have built for others”. Now mention other hiring solutions or opportunities you have been involved in such as job carving, OJTs, supported employment or any innovative solutions. It is the flexibility in creating solutions that gets this group’s attention and brings forward employers interest. .

The second approach is to offer in the public presentation what you are offering in the one-on-one approach: “We want to build a locally responsive employment program by understanding local employers’ present and future hiring needs. We have a lot of resources available that we can use. Let me tell you about our resources and how we have addressed the employment needs of others. I invite you to discuss with me later your issues to help us guide building our program.”

All these techniques are based on getting an opportunity to connect with the employer to construct that ever-valuable employer relationship, before you or even the employer knows whether there will be a job opening.

The recession is addressed through relationships built prior to the recession. If you are building them now, they will serve you well both in the recession and once it is over.

We provide training and consultation on any aspect of Job Development. Feel free to visit our website at www.dtg-emp.com or email me at allen@dtg-emp.com for more solutions.

