

## **Job Search Challenges - The Experience of Job Seekers**

Survey Conducted in October 2008

By Carl Bradford

### ***The Bradford Project Overview***

In October, 2008 I conducted a survey of job seekers to obtain their experiences and perspectives about their job search.

I had one overriding, key objective in mind. I wanted to gain first-hand knowledge and insight from the job seeker to assist with my role in certifying corporate recruiters in The Lou Adler recruiting method. Every recruiter who goes through this training must complete four modules of certification homework. I have the opportunity to see the challenges and frustrations of corporate recruiters across a broad spectrum of companies and organizations and I wanted to better understand the other side, i.e. the job seeker. I wanted to know what the key **challenges that job candidates faced, i.e. their pain points.**

This has provided a truly unique position to see both sides of the recruiting and hiring process nationally.

### ***Steps to set up the project***

Here are the steps I took.

1. I created a **separate web site with some interesting and helpful job search tips/information.**
2. I created a "no match" email for candidates who didn't match my current search assignments. This email directed job candidates to this job tips web site and had a PDF attachment with 5 specific job search ideas.
3. Every candidate that I didn't use for my active search since from about late May 2008 got this professional "no job match" email and the attachment.
4. This created an amazing result. I have received many, many emails from grateful candidates even though I didn't have a job opportunity for them. I received comments such as: *"you have restored my faith in humanity."* Others said, *"You are truly unique among recruiters."* Since the majority of these individuals are in hiring manager roles, I've received many comments that *"You will be the first recruiter I call when I need to hire someone."* I got many other similar emails, typically several per day.
5. This built trust and recognition for me.
6. I developed a second eBook, one with over 500+ job boards all categorized by industry, etc. I built that into a nice PDF and offered it FREE with participation in my survey.
7. Next, I carved out 625 candidates from my Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that had received my free job search suggestions and first eReport.
8. Then I constructed a second email offering my second eBook (500+ job boards) and asked that they "return the favor" for both eBooks by completing my survey.
9. As of November 1, 2008 I've received a 24% response from the list. I don't know how good it is, but given the fact I've only touched most of this list one time before asking for their participation, I

think it's pretty good. I might also add that I've received quite a few emails thanking me for the second eBook and for the opportunity to "be heard" via the survey.

## ***Survey Results Overview***

I utilized a very specific survey methodology; one that incorporates about 60% open ended questions. One of the key narrative questions was: *What has been (or was) the most frustrating/challenging thing about your job search? Provide as much or little information as you like.*

Here is a brief overview of some of the results.

1. Some Survey demographics
  - a. 625 invites - 148 participated - this was a broad cross-section of professionals
  - b. Consisted of 13 questions; 7 required a narrative answer - the rest primarily gathered demographic data
  - c. Job Search Status
    - i. 93% still active in their search
  - d. Employment status - total 65% anxious to move or unemployed. 25% semi-active
    - i. 25% are semi-active
    - ii. 36% still employed, but anxious to move
    - iii. 39% unemployed
  - e. Years of experience
    - i. 13% - 10 years or below in experience
    - ii. 15% - 11-15 years
    - iii. 25% - 15-20 years
    - iv. 47% - 21+ years of experience
  - f. Cash compensation
    - i. 20% - under \$100K
    - ii. 17% - \$100K - \$125K
    - iii. 22% - \$125K - \$150K
    - iv. 19% - \$150K - \$200K
    - v. 22% - Over 200K
  - g. Gender - 82% male
  - h. How difficult to deal with most significant challenge - 64% struggled
    - i. 32% - very difficult
    - ii. 42% - somewhat difficult
    - iii. 25% - no difficulty
  - i. How many dollars have you invested in your search? This ranged from \$0 to \$15,000.
  - j. Some **significant pain points** - Here is a sampling of actual comments:
    - i. Grouping many responses together; the most profound and overwhelming result was a strong frustration with working through recruiters - both independent and in-house - "Car salesmen in nicer suits" - "gate keepers- one more hurdle to get over"
    - ii. "It seems people are slow to respond to inquiries about job opportunities. As a HR professional, I am appalled by the lack of responsiveness of my fellow HR folks as well as how slow things move. That is not how I operate and it can be very frustrating. Maybe it has something to do with the economy...I don't know."

- iii. "Hands down the most frustrating part of a job search is the unprofessionalism and lack of common courtesy among recruiters and hiring managers. You apply for a position or in many cases they reach out to you first and schedule you for an initial phone screen, which often takes up to a 1/2 hour then say the next step is to present your information to the hiring manager. If you are not selected you never hear back from them nor do you receive a response any follow up inquires. I have also gone on a formal interview and have the same thing happen. Just flat out unprofessional and rude."
- iv. "Feedback - just the sheer lack of visibility regarding results from their efforts - from resume submission thru post phone screen and F/F interviews"
- v. "Finding good jobs to apply to - knowing where and how to search"
- vi. Job application process and the - ATS black hole - "many employers require you to submit your resume on line for a position. Once that is done it is like a black hole. Many do not provide any status and there is no way to get a status."
- vii. Job boards - "Applying through job boards is frustrating as they seem to enter into never-never-land."
- viii. Resume issues - ranged from those that had their resumes professionally prepared on down - total frustration with getting results
- ix. Implied - wrong perception of TRP, i.e. "find me a job"
- x. Interesting - little frustration around the interview component - probably not correct, but is the perception.

I hope you find this survey overview interesting and helpful. Of course, there is much more to my data, however I consider the detailed data proprietary. I think there is much that all of us as recruiters can learn, not only about how we conduct our daily work, but how we treat others during the process.

I know from my perspective, after over 40 years in HR and as a Recruiting Consultant, it becomes easily to de-humanize the process and forget that there is another human being on the other end....and one that is often in a stressful circumstance.

Carl Bradford