

'Tis the Season for Your Job Search

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Many job seekers are tempted to slow down the search (or pause it altogether) during the winter holiday season. But career experts say that, if you're looking for a [new job](#), taking a break during the holidays is a mistake--because hiring doesn't stop.

At the end of the year, some companies rush to fill job openings that might otherwise be removed from next year's budget. And other companies will be looking ahead--as career expert Kimberly Bishop, the author of "Get Down to Business and You'll Get the Job," explains: "Jobs that might have been on hold until budgets are in place will become available in January," she says.

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Roy Cohen, an executive coach and the author of "The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide," agrees, saying, "There's a belief that recruiting shuts down during the holidays. That's a myth--so when other people take off from their job searching during the holidays, you're at an advantage should an opportunity surface. It's all about numbers and odds."

In fact, the holidays provide some distinct advantages and special opportunities for proactive job seekers. Here's how to make the most of your holiday-season job search:

Be flexible. Judi Perkins, of FindthePerfectJob.com, says, "When I was a recruiter, the holidays were one of my busiest times, and I was often on the phone either side of Christmas day." Conversely, this means that you should be prepared to interview at unusual times, to allow for a recruiter's or hiring manager's busy holiday schedule.

Do volunteer work. All sorts of philanthropic organizations ramp up activities during the holidays--and volunteering can be a great way to [network](#), gain skills, and fill the gap that unemployment might otherwise leave on your resume.

(For more tips, read "[Volunteering Yourself into a Job](#).")

Cohen adds, "You'll meet other volunteers--great people who, by nature, will want to help. You'll feel good, too."

Look into temporary positions. Many companies have end-of-year crunches--at the same time that many workers want to take time off--so they look to staffing agencies to fill gaps. A temporary job can be a great foot in the door at a new company.

(Read "[Your Temp-to-Perm Hiring Strategy](#)" for tips on making the most of a temporary position.)

Seek out seasonal jobs. Bishop says, "The most obvious opportunities are in [retail](#) sales or retail-related positions. There are a variety of part-time and temporary jobs that range from sales and customer service to merchandising, stocking, greeting, gift-wrapping, and playing a role in special in-store events.

She adds, "The hospitality industry also offers opportunities: hotels, restaurants, and caterers have more events and parties, so they need to staff-up.

Use holiday social events to network. You don't want to make every conversation about your job search--but letting people know how they can help you is crucial. Cohen advises, "Have your pitch--who you are, what you want, and why--ready and perfect."

(Shy about networking? Read "[Networking Tips for Shy People](#).")

And try to keep things positive. For instance, when you tell people that you're looking for work, also tell them how you've been productive with your time off.

Reach out to your contacts. The holidays are a great reason to reach out to friends and acquaintances, as well as to reconnect with people you may have fallen out of contact with. Cohen suggests, "Send out a holiday greeting, but add a little extra in your message. Email or snail-mail the card to everyone in your job-search universe. It should be upbeat--that you continue and are committed to search for a great job and know that it is only a matter of time and timing. ... And that you're deeply grateful for all the people who have reached out along the way during your search."

(If you don't know which holidays a contact celebrates, "Happy New Year" is a safe sentiment.)

And remember that the holidays are a time for *giving*. Find ways to help the people in your network, and they'll be likelier to help you in the future.

Recommit to your job search. Start 2011 off right: make an appointment with yourself to determine your goals for the coming year; then schedule some time to revamp your [resume](#), practice your [interviewing skills](#), and [polish up your personal brand](#).

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