

Take Advantage of Seasonality to Power Your Job Search

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That sounds like a simple enough question, and most people would give you a simple answer. The best time to look for a job is when you need a job. The longer you wait to start your job search the longer it will take for you to find a job. Why delay? There is no benefit to waiting.

In reality, however, things are a little more complicated.

If you are working full time and want to change jobs, you need to juggle your spare time between your family, vacations and other activities. If your time is limited, it makes sense to look for a job when your search will be most productive.

Moreover, job search is not just one single activity. Interviewing, filling out applications, networking and researching potential employers are all different stages in the job search process.

To get the best results you want to synchronize your job search process with the employer's hiring process. The hiring process includes job openings, posting job listings, sorting through applications and interviewing.

Let's take a look how the job seeker's search process and the employer's hiring process are affected by

Seasonality Varies According to Industry

Teaching jobs: Let's say you are a high school teacher and are looking for a full-time teaching job. You know the school year starts in August or September. But you also realize that schools can't wait until the end of the summer to start looking for teachers. If educators take the summer off, they can't start posting jobs in June or July either. That would leave school principals no time to interview applicants. Therefore most schools will want post listings by April and May.

And just as you might expect, research indicates that April and May are indeed the peak months for posting job listings for teachers. The same research validates common sense solutions for other industries. Let's look at a few more examples.

Non-profit jobs: The last four months of the year, especially November, are peak hiring periods for non-profit organizations. Why? Non-profits work on tight budgets that get revised at the end of each calendar year. When new positions are created they usually don't start until January of the new fiscal year. Non-profits ramp up their recruiting as the year draws to a close. Therefore non-profit hiring peaks two months in advance of when new positions are filled. When is the worst month for non-profit hiring? According to this logic, we would expect the fewest non-profit hires to occur in January, and statistics do indeed bear this out.

Retail store jobs: Everyone knows that December is make or break for retail stores. Therefore retail job listings peak in November. The next two most active months for job openings in stores are September and August. Why? Stores can wait until almost the last minute to hire personnel for the sales floor, but there are many other workers like merchandisers, stockroom clerks and inventory managers who must begin work several months in advance of the holiday selling season.

A great way to figure out peak hiring season is to keep track of new jobs by using daily or weekly email alerts from MyJobHelper.com. It's easy to sign up for alerts [here](#). Check out the new jobs everyday and then enter the number of new jobs in a spreadsheet or simply track them in a notebook. You will easily be able to see whether hiring activity is increasing or decreasing for the job you are pursuing *in the exact location where you live!*

The Case For and Against December

December is a controversial month for job searching. Many people believe it's the worst month to look for a job. That is because hiring personnel are distracted by holiday parties and the pressure to get as many sales on the books before the year ends. The last two weeks are also very popular times for taking vacations. And many offices close down entirely for the week between Christmas and New Years. For all these reasons job seekers tend to take a break in December.

On the other hand, for this very reason, when you look for a job in December you have less competition. In December the odds may be lower that anyone will open your emails. On the other hand, if somebody does notice your email, it will be more likely to draw a response. Because of holiday festivities, the hiring managers you do reach, will tend to be in a good mood. Your interest in the company at a time when everyone else is out parting makes you look more diligent and committed.

December is not a good time to annoy hiring managers with follow-up emails. But it is a perfect time to send them a holiday card. Likewise, company holiday parties present an outstanding networking opportunity. See if you can get a friend or contact to take you to his or her holiday party. Non-company parties may not be quite as productive, but they give you a chance to practice your networking skills. And you may get lucky and meet someone who knows someone who has any opening in their company that may fit you. Just remember to not be as aggressive as you would during the rest of the year. December is the time to plant flowers that bloom in January.

Adjusting the Search Process to Seasonal Opportunities

Once you have figured out the peak hiring season for your target job or company, you need to be prepared to take advantage of it. When there is less hiring activity you should cut back and be more selective in filling out applications and sending out emails.

Take advantage of the extra time you have to catch up on these critical activities which are the key to a successful job search.

Setting career objectives: No one, absolutely no one, enjoys having to look for a new job. It's natural to rush ahead in an effort to get the process over as soon as possible. However, you need to resist the temptation to look for old job at a different company without first asking yourself whether it's time to adjust your career goals. The all-time classic guide to reexamining your job goals is Richard Nelson Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?*. This book is revised every year, so it's easy to pick up an older edition for just a few dollars. The details may change, but the principles in the book that lead to success endure.

Networking: Networking is something you should do all year round, but it can really pay big dividend when hiring slows down. As one job coach says, "It's not about getting jobs; it's about getting meetings." And the key to getting more meetings is lining up [informational interviews](#) to gather information on the industry sector and on specific companies. Richard Nelson Bolles popularized the informational interview in *What Color is Your Parachute?* based on the pioneering work of [John Crystal](#).

Refreshing and Learning New Skills:

Employees and employers both worry that a worker's job skills can deteriorate when someone is out of work. You can invest in yourself and allay employer fears by taking courses that to brush up on your skills or to learn new skills. This need not be expensive. Check out the offerings at your local college or community college. Or take advantage of online learning opportunities at website like [lynda.com](#), [Khan Academy](#) or [Coursera](#). Be sure to list the courses you take on your resume.

Final Thoughts

We have reviewed the most important strategies you can use to take advantage of seasonal hiring fluctuations in your job search. But don't lose sight of the big picture.

Job search is a numbers game, the more people you meet with, the more companies you research, the more applications you send in, the more chances you give yourself to get hired. Getting hired often boils down to being in the right place at the right time. So always stay active. Work hard and work smart. That's what matters. But every one needs a little luck. Stay active and you give yourself more chances to get lucky. Someone's got to get luckily. Why not you!