

## **(Plan Your Career) Keep looking: No winter break for job seekers**

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Holiday preparation checklist: wrap gifts, plan parties, eat sweets, oh, and find a job. If you are unemployed over the holidays, you might think this is a slow time for hiring. You might be tempted to take a break from your networking, applying, and interviewing routine. You might be making a mistake. At year end, a few critical stars align that can make the holidays an ideal time to look for new work.

First, most companies create an annual budget, with a certain dollar amount designated for salaries per department or branch. This year every company has saved money by laying off workers, holding back on raises and otherwise spending less on staffing. Some department heads get to year-end and realize they have staffing money to burn or headcount allowance to account for. This is where you come in, ready to be hired. Head hunters know that the last week in December is typically fabulous for staffing. While this year is anything but typical, it is possible that in some companies, some last minute hiring will be in the works.

Secondly, the holiday season is famous for getting people out of their shells – and out of their offices. Job seekers will have the opportunity to stand at the bar with people they do not ordinarily mingle with, including relatives, neighbors and those dear, old friends you only see once a year. Of course, you will refrain from passing out your resume along with the eggnog, but you can use these encounters to politely inquire about everyone else, asking, What do you do? Showing genuine interest in someone else's work may lead to a follow-up conversation. Don't ruin a good party by sharing the details of your lay-off on the spot, but if it makes sense, ask permission to call this person next week to find out more about his or her job/company/industry.

Finally, if everyone else thinks hiring takes a holiday break, your chances of rising to the top of the pile of applicants improves exponentially. While many people do take vacation at the end of the year, those left behind often have a more relaxed attitude toward their day and may be willing to take a phone call or even agree to an informational interview that they would ordinarily be too busy to bother with.

Keep looking, continue networking and don't give up. You just might be able to give yourself the gift of a new job for the holidays.

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