



SHEILA MARKIN NIELSEN

Please enjoy this sample chapter from
Job Quest: How to Become the Insider Who Gets Hired
by Sheila Markin Nielsen,
available April 2015

Table of Contents

Introduction: A Surprising Epiphany about How People Really Get Jobs

Part I: The Basics

Chapter One: The Insider Advantage (excerpted here)

Chapter Two: What Does Luck Have to Do with It?

Chapter Three: Fortune Favors the Prepared Mind

Chapter Four: Blueprint for the Quest

Part II: Preparation

Chapter Five: How to Prepare for Your Quest

Part III: Launch Your Quest

Chapter Six: Finding the Key People to Connect With

Chapter Seven: How to Get Knights and Wizards to Meet with You

Chapter Eight: What Happens in Meetings with Knights and Wizards

Chapter Nine: Friendship Lite

Chapter Ten: Interviews

Chapter Eleven: The Tipping Point and the Campaign Phase

Part IV: Concepts to Utilize as You Work Your Quest

Chapter Twelve: Four Overarching Concepts

Chapter Thirteen: Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Chapter Fourteen: A Model Quest

Chapter Fifteen: Concluding Remarks

Appendices

Chapter One:

The Insider Advantage

You need to find a job. You have to look for opportunities. You are totally ready to do this, but you are not sure how to start. There are jobs posted on the Internet. It makes sense to go there and start applying. That's what everyone does to find work, right? So that is what you do.

YOU JUMP INTO IT starting with sites, such as Monster, Indeed, Career Builder, and Craig's List. You look at the postings. You find jobs that are in your field and some others you would like to interview for even though your skills are not a perfect match. If you could just get a chance to talk with someone at the workplace, you know you could make a good case!

You apply. You send out résumés and cover letters, and you hope. And you apply to some more postings and hope. And then ... and then ... sometimes nothing. It seems like you sent your résumé to a black hole. Sometimes you get an interview over the phone and then ... nothing. And sometimes you get a phone interview followed by an in-person interview, and maybe a series of tests, and more in-person interviews, and then ... and then ... a rejection. What happened? What is going on here? Who is getting hired anyhow?

Peter Cappelli, Professor of Management at The Wharton School and director of Wharton's Center for Human Resources writes about the problem of hiring people using software and online automated systems

and how that elimination of the human interface is resulting in good people not being able to get jobs that could be good matches. His book, *Why Good People Can't Get Jobs*, is a must-read for anyone trying to understand why sending a résumé to a workplace using an automated system can be an exercise in frustration. Cappelli writes, "Because job applications are done online, applicants rarely talk to anyone, even by e-mail, during the hiring process."

In Cappelli's book, Elaine Orlor of Talent Function describes how automated systems work. "First, hiring managers write up descriptions of the job they need to fill. Since hiring managers frequently cannot agree on exactly what they want, the description ends up being vague, a practice that inevitably encourages still more people to apply for the position."

Cappelli notes that there is already a huge pool of job seekers, which is overwhelming human resources departments that are supposed to keep costs down. This results in further automation of the entire hiring process. In addition, federal antidiscrimination regulations can result in a description of qualifying requirements that are very broad in order to avoid the appearance of discrimination, which encourages still more people to apply. To add to the problem, "Managers pile all the credentials and expertise into the job description to minimize the risk that the candidate will fail (be an imperfect match for the skill set sought), making it virtually impossible to find anyone who fits." Cappelli notes that Tom Keebler at the HR consulting firm Towers Watson, who consults with employers about their hiring systems, says "even well-intentioned hiring managers have a problem trying to identify skills that are not easily associated with credentials or experience." And once the requirement is part of the software, it becomes a "hurdle that applicants have to clear to become a qualified candidate."

According to Jacquelyn Smith in her *Forbes Online* article "7 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Your Job Search," fifty percent of applicants are weeded out before anyone looks at them. In his book, Cappelli illustrates the problem with examples of people who are unquestionably qualified for a position, yet are rejected by the software program because the particular brand name being sought in the job description was different from the one used in the résumé or a title was

different in the résumé from the one used in the software. Cappelli notes that software cannot “lean back in a chair opposite the job seeker and iron out these little misunderstandings over a cup of coffee.”

It turns out you only have a small chance of getting a job through an external online source, according to Gerry Crispin of *CareerXroads*, an author of the annual “Source of Hire Report.” Having an internal company contact is far more effective than applying for jobs using job boards like Monster, Career Builder or Craig’s List. Indeed it is the most successful external source compared to the other options, as Jacquelyn Smith describes in her *Forbes Online* article “New Research Shows Where Employers Find Their New Hires.” How ineffective is the application using a large search engine? The literature supports the fact that finding a job using an online site has a very low probability of success – somewhere in the range of 2.1 to 4 percent – and that internal referrals are by far the most effective sources used by workplaces to find their hires.

Think of the job market as a big, messy, open marketplace that is constantly shifting and changing. It is full of intrigue and politics. Who has the real power to hire? Who has the client’s business? It is buffeted by the economy. Should the company hire now or wait? Is the big client going to stay or leave for another firm with lower rates or a closer relationship with a key person? When a company or organization posts a job opening is that a real job or is it bogus because they actually have a good person inside the workplace or someone who came highly recommended and who probably has the inside track but they want to avoid the appearance of favoritism?

In my work with clients, I hear about these behind-the-scenes activities. For example, a client I was working with recently did an excellent job of relationship building and went through a thorough interview process. He was promised the job by the employer, but workplace protocol required that the company post a job description online. My client expressed concern that the workplace might not hire him after all, but the person in charge of hiring assured him he should not worry, the job would be his, the job posting was really just required by agency protocol. Then another client of mine saw that posting and came to work with me to try to put together the best possible résumé and

cover letter because he knew he was perfect for this job. Of course the job was landed by the client who had built the internal relationships and gotten the promise from the employer.

A job posting may look like a clear cut recitation of skills that the company seeks, but behind that posting could be a great deal of uncertainty and even a mistaken emphasis on certain skills. Hard skills can be identified, but what about soft skills? Soft skills are often very important but they are hard to describe and rarely make it into the posting. You will never see a job description like this: “We need someone who has amazing people skills to work with our ridiculously difficult clients and can also get along with the overbearing manager in this group who has demoralized everyone who ever worked with him.”

Furthermore, a workplace might not officially be considering additional staff, but if the right person shows up at the door, she might be hired because the work is there and the skill set is a match and the person has come to the attention of the workplace with a glowing recommendation from someone known and trusted. Bingo. And there was never a posting. Or maybe there was a posting, and maybe that posting was even generated after the candidate was discovered, but the person in charge of hiring had already made up her mind. The posting was more for show.

Postings are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to jobs. About 80% of available jobs are never advertised, according to Jacquelyn Smith in her *Forbes Online* article “7 Things You Probably Didn’t Know About Your Job Search.” Many workplaces need help but do not post or have not yet posted a job. If they need to hire and if the right candidate can show up on the radar screen, that person might well get lucky.

Given the chaotic, messy nature of the job market and the difficulty getting past the many hurdles that are set up by the workplace and particularly the software systems being used to do the early vetting of candidates, how are you supposed to find a job? How are you going to prove that you have the right skills and abilities and would be a great addition when a workplace is unapproachable?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 70% of jobs are found by networking. This number is reported in the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS. JOLTS data also reveals that 40% of jobs

filled by employers are never advertised. “Once we include the number of jobs that were filled by someone known to the employer, the number soars to 70%,” says Kimberly Beatty in her *Jobfully Online Content and Marketing* blog post titled “The Math Behind the Networking Claim.”

Networking seems to be the search method of choice, but networking is not defined very well. What is networking? Most people think networking consists of asking everyone you know if they have heard of a job or opportunity in your industry and seeing if they can come up with a good match or some suggestions about where to look. Many clients I work with have been networking in this way. I call it *networking as usual*. If there is low hanging fruit and the contact person really understands the jobseeker’s background and skills, this approach might be helpful. But many of the clients I work with have already tried networking in this way and they tell me they are not landing jobs using this approach. They think that networking doesn’t work for them.

Have you ever had someone ask you if you have heard of a job in their industry? Your response is likely to be, “No, I haven’t heard of anything but I will keep an eye out for you and I will call or e-mail you if I do hear of something.” End of conversation. The truth is that even really nice, helpful people do not want to spend time hunting for a job for you. And the default thinking is something like this: “I hope he finds a new job but I don’t have the time to look for him. I am sure he will find something one of these days. Meantime, I hope he doesn’t become a pest, calling me up and asking more of me. I am just too busy!”

Let’s look a little more closely at who lands the jobs. Silk Road, a talent manager solutions provider, recently reported that internal sources produce the most hires. Internal sources included employee referrals, company website, current employees, and recruiter-sourced referrals. Employee referrals resulted in 61% of the hires. The company website resulted in 26% of the hires. Current employees accounted for 8% of the hires. Former employees were 2%. Recruiter-sourced was 2%. Walk-ins were 1%. The Silk Road findings in the report titled “Recruitment Marketing Effectiveness: Meaningful Metrics Straight from the Source,” reveal that internal sources produce almost twice the number of hires as external ones, which include job search engines, job boards, print advertising, and job fairs. “It is still about who you know. It shouldn’t be

a surprise to anyone that employee referrals are the number one source; those candidates come with built-in recommendations and in many cases have already been sold on your culture and know more about your company than the average external candidate,” says Thomas Boyle, director of product marketing at Silk Road, as quoted by Jacquelyn Smith in her *Forbes Online* article “New Research Shows Where Employers Find Their New Hires.”

The insider advantage is a big advantage. But here is the quandary you face if you don't have an inside track: how are you supposed to become known and trusted by a workplace that will not even respond to your carefully crafted résumé and cover letter? How can you make your case to an impenetrable workplace that will not allow you to come in and meet with them for an interview even though your skills and background and personality are a great match?

The answer can be found by understanding the way the gifted, natural networkers create good luck and open doors for themselves.

We need to talk about good luck and how luck gets created.

We need to talk about the way fortune favors the prepared mind and how to prepare the mind for a job quest.

We need to talk about how to go on a job quest.

We need to talk about the map of the quest, a blueprint to guide your search efforts.

We need to be sure you are well-prepared for the journey with the right tools, supplies, and messaging in your informal or formal interviews for a successful result.

And we need to talk about some overarching concepts that you will want to use as you conduct your search.

It is important to start by understanding how luck works and how it can be created.



Find out how to use rapid relationship and trust building to create your own job search luck!

In her book, *Job Quest: How to Become the Insider Who Gets Hired*, Sheila Markin Nielsen spells out what natural networkers already know: the people who get hired are the ones who have personal connections with the workplace. She provides a step-by-step process based on rapid relationship and trust building that explains how to become the insider who gets hired.



"This book is essential reading for any new graduate or professional who is looking for a job or contemplating a career move. For those who are currently conducting a search, Sheila Nielsen provides clear, innovative, and practical suggestions for landing the next role. For people who are exploring new directions in their working lives, the book provides an effective framework for making the right choices."

—JOHN A. CHALLENGER, CEO, Challenger Gray and Christmas

"I started my career in a law firm and would have benefited tremendously from the insights and advice offered by Sheila Nielsen. In a thoughtful and engaging style, she helps any professional or new graduate design and execute their own quest for a great job and career. These tools and techniques are as valuable for someone early in their career as they are for someone well established but looking for the right next opportunity."

—ELLIOT SCHRAGE, VP Communications, Facebook

Sheila Markin Nielsen has over 25 years of experience running her own firm as a career coach. She is an attorney with a master's degree in social work, an author, columnist, and popular public speaker. Founded in 1990, Nielsen Career Consulting has assisted over 3,500 professionals in job search and career path guidance and professional development.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS
Careers / Job Hunting
7 X 10" / 230 PAGES

ISBN 978-0-692-37277-7



9 780692 372777

NIELSEN CAREER PRESS
NielsenCareerConsulting.com