

Summer job search: the clock's ticking

By Sarah Butcher

17 Aug 2005

There are several times of the year conducive to doing nothing at all. One is Christmas day afternoon (unless you happen to be without a dishwasher). The other is the entire month of August.

So, what do you do if you're a job seeker this month? Do you hang up your CV writing hat and spend the next few weeks flicking idly through *The Da Vinci Code*? Or do you persist in dispatching your details to the world despite the probability that it's on the beach?

'It depends,' is recruiters' verdict. Factors to be taken into consideration include whether you actually want a hirer to reach decision (unlikely), whether you're aiming to find a new role before the year end, and whether you're actually in work while you're looking for a job (in which case you may not be reading *The Da Vinci Code* anyway).

Networking not closing

Linda Bialecki of New York financial search firm Bialecki Inc. says you'll be lucky to get anything finalized this month. "It's hard to get to a decision in August," she says. "Someone will say they'd love to talk, but then their boss will be on vacation, so you'll have to wait until the boss gets back for things to happen anyway."

The upside, according to Bialecki, is that people who stay behind during August tend to be fairly relaxed. They may not exactly be wearing Bermuda shorts and slapping on Hawaiian Tropic, but they should be more inclined to take time out to meet for an informal lunch. "August is a good time for networking," she says.

Isabel Martin, head of European financial services recruitment at Korn/Ferry International, agrees. "August is a good time just to get in touch with people," she says. "It's hard to be systematic about anything because half the people aren't around, but those who are usually have time to have a better quality dialogue."

The exception comes if you're planning to look for a job in continental Europe, in which case quality dialogues could be hard. Alberto Gavazzi, head of financial services recruitment at Russell Reynolds in Milan, says Italian job seeking during August is best forgotten. He says: "Everyone knows August is a dead month here. No one expects anything to happen, everyone's on holiday."

Last chance before December

If this is enough to drive you to the beach, bear in mind that life goes on in London and New York, and some recruiters say if you don't land a job now, you'll be lucky to get one before December.

"By September and October there are far fewer hires," says David Korn, a recruiter at the Options Group. "We're starting to get into the period when hiring managers weigh up time spent on the desk versus buying out a bonus. The first few weeks of August are still viable, but after that it gets harder for managers to justify a hire."

Idlers stay busy

If this isn't enough to spur you into action, recruiters say people out of a job need to be aware that the clock is always ticking, whether or not half the world's on vacation. Jacob Navon, a partner at New York search firm Westwood Partners: says there's no time to lose: "All else being equal there is a very strong inverse correlation between the length of time since you were last employed and your employability."

While senior staff with good industry reputations and strong networks can afford to take a casual approach to summer job seeking, Navon says junior staff with shakier contacts are less able to afford the luxury of

relaxation: "Yes the opportunities may be fewer, but this is a great time to show creativity and resourcefulness which can be just the thing to tip the hiring manager's decision in your favor."

The Da Vinci Code may have to wait a few months after all...