

# Job seekers find 'team' may help their search

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Looking for a new job is a lonely pursuit, one that can sap the energy and enthusiasm of even the hardest job seeker.

But one way to avoid the soul-sapping of job hunting, career experts say, is to join forces with others who are on the hunt, to share ideas, refine search and interview techniques and to lend an understanding ear.

"If you are doing your job search in isolation, it is a very lonely experience," said George Fleming, owner of Phoenix-based Momentum Coaching Resources. "People tend to bog down. They tend to lose momentum that they may have had at some early point."

Fleming has formed several "weekly strategy teams," a collection of six to eight job seekers who meet once a week for two hours to talk about their searches. Job seekers benefit from being part of a team of job hunters in a number of ways, he said.

First, members have a support group that understands just how difficult a job search can be, he said.

"Everybody in the group understands what the other person is going through," he said. "There is no other forum to acknowledge what it feels like."

Although the team doesn't spend a lot of time discussing the emotions the job seekers are experiencing, it is comforting to be part of a group that is going through the same thing, said Scott Wiegand, who has been part of one of Fleming's groups since September.

"There is nobody out there who knows what I am going through," said the Peoria computer system expert. "They acted as a support group. They are going through the same things I'm going through."

In the meetings, members are given equal time to talk about what they experienced during their job search over the previous week. They'll talk about who they called, who they met with, what companies they sent resumes to and what they plan to do in the coming week.

One of the strongest aspects of being part of a job-search team is that the members hold each other accountable for their efforts, Fleming said.

Brad Kidd, a Phoenix information systems manager who has been part of one of Fleming's group since the start of the year, said he found himself pushing himself harder than he would have had he been on a solo job pursuit.

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## Teaming up

Career experts suggest expanding your network and lessening your job-search stress by joining with others on the job hunt. Among the benefits of sharing job-search experiences:

- Gain new ideas/contacts.
  - Refine your search and search techniques.
  - Get critiques/ideas for your resume, cover letters, etc.
  - Acquire group support/accountability for pushing job search.
  - Expand network of people looking for job openings.
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"When you spend two hours in a small group going over what you have done and your techniques, it gives you some real clarity about your process and what you are doing right or wrong," Kidd said.

The group also provides a fresh perspective on your resume, your cover letters, your phone technique, your "elevator speech" and your interview techniques.

"When you get a fresh set of eyes looking at them, the tools get upgraded," Fleming said.

For Wiegand, the weekly strategy team is the core of his network. He relies on the other members to know his career aspirations, his talents and to be on the lookout for opportunities for him.

The best groups have a balance mix of job seekers, from front-line workers to CEOs, Fleming said.

Each can offer a perspective to the others that they might not have considered, he said. It's also a good idea to avoid having people all from the same industry, who could end up going after the same positions.