

From Marc Cenedella, TheLadders.com, Inc.

Beat the Interview Flu

The flu season is upon us; it seeks out many, it spares few. Beware! This malady tends to strike your co-workers on Thursday afternoons and Tuesday mornings, and can easily be mistaken for dentist appointments and sick days.

Yes, **interview flu** season is afoot in the land. It's that stretch of the year from Labor Day to Tax Day when our thoughts turn to new opportunities, changing jobs, and rolling over 401(k)s ...

OK, all joking aside, this is the time of year when many professionals increase their efforts in the job hunt. And that inevitably leads to conundrum: "**How do I look for a job while I have a job?**"

For most of us, our formative personal experiences with job-hunting come from a long time ago – applying to work as a waiter during college, interviewing for summer internships, hanging out at the University Career Office. And that leads us to make incorrect assumptions about what's best for our job hunts today, as professionals.

Specifically, conventional wisdom about the professional job hunt is wrong:

"If my boss finds out, it's catastrophic for me. Therefore, secrecy is of the utmost importance."

That paranoia may have been appropriate when you were working summer jobs, or just part of a herd of first-year employees – easily canned, easily replaced – but the world is much different at \$100K+.

"Got fired for looking" is extremely rare in professional positions. In fact, in six years here at TheLadders, and from the over 4 million subscribers we've had, I've heard of only one case – and when I spoke to the employee involved, the bad blood with the boss was already very bad by that time.

The far more likely response of your boss is **Relief** or **Repair**.

As a manager, you know how maddening it can be to handle troublesome employees. Just think how difficult it is for you to unload a lazy or ineffective headcount: filling out forms, endless rounds with HR, mandatory job counseling, etc. So finding out that your worker also knows it's not working and is looking for work elsewhere leads to **Relief**: "Phew, I'm not going to have pay severance or go through the motions on these confrontational conversations about performance anymore."

Or, in the much more likely case that this is bad news for your boss, comes the response of **Repair**: "Oh, my gosh! He's thinking about leaving? I have to make budget this year and get all these projects done, I can't afford to lose somebody right now. I'd better do something to get things back on the right track!"

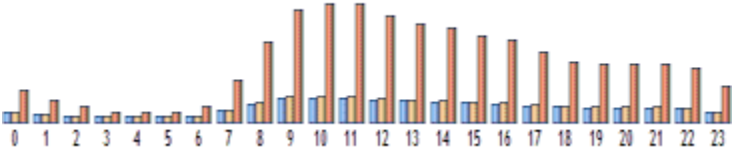
And while the best way to approach your job hunt is to be discreet – there's certainly no benefit to flaunting it – going to unreasonable lengths can actually be harmful.

Two instances in particular come to mind.

First, scheduling job interviews is a challenge. There are only so many breakfast meetings and after-work drinks you can make in the course of a month, so, yes, inevitably, you'll need to take some meetings during the work day. Kept to a reasonable number, this is fine – don't stress yourself out if you need to do it two or three times in the course of a month.

Secondly, the "confidential" resume can hinder you without helping you. Like most people, recruiters prefer dealing with a name, not a number. And by making your resume "confidential," you attract less recruiter attention. So while we have this feature available and honor your desire for it, I would have to recommend against marking your name "confidential" in your job hunt.

Finally: Please, please, don't use your company's e-mail, printers, phones, or stationery. (On the other hand, there is the plain truth in the job hunt business ... looking for work takes place during work hours. Here's a graph of average web site traffic at TheLadders.com during the hours of the day:



It always peaks just before lunch!