

Using vacation to look for a job by Rose Jonas, Ph.D.

In truth, it's not a good idea to look for a job when you're on vacation. You need time away from work to refill your energy glass, to spend time with family, to do non-work projects. You need a different focus for a bit so you can return to your work recharged and interested again in how you spend those eight or so hours.

Your job may be so demanding that you can't steal even a few minutes from it, and vacation is your only opportunity. If you can divide your vacation, you'll get better efficiency. For example, if you have two weeks, take a week and do preliminary job-hunting activities, go back to work for several weeks, then take your second week for networking meetings and interviews.

If you can't do that, here's another way:

- For several months before your vacation, *make job-hunting your hobby*. Spend evenings and weekends reading a career book, taking a career workshop, developing your strategy, and work toward the goal of filling up your vacation days with meetings and interviews. You will find this a challenge because of your normal energy drain from work and family responsibilities, but it will be worth it.
- During your vacation, *look for a job from Monday through Thursday*, early morning to late afternoon. Have breakfast, lunch, and late-day lattes. Have two or three interviews each day. Cram in as much as you can. (See how important that pre-work was?)
- *Take a long weekend*. Don't work on Friday. Take your family camping or on a short road trip. Get a hotel room in your area and act like a tourist. In other words, have a mini-vacation. You'll restore yourself for the next week's hunt. You need this break. Remember, if your vacation job hunt pays off with a new job, it might be a year before you're available for a real vacation.

Searching despite holidays and summer vacation delays

Summers and pre-holiday periods can discourage the job seeker. Not only are you wilting in the heat or coping with your own pre-holiday blues, but you can't seem to get anyone's attention! They're either gone or so overwhelmed they don't answer your calls.

You keep pushing but don't seem to get anywhere. Psych yourself up and keep pushing. This is actually a pretty good time to get together with people. Their hearts are feeling more generous, or their brains as fried as yours. Giving you an informational interview may look like work but won't feel like it. If you persist in calling, you'll get an invitation. Take advantage of that!

The magic of doing this is that there's always a burst of hiring after big holiday downtimes (January and September are the biggest hiring months). If you have kept at your march, you'll be at the front of the line for the pre-employment physicals because you got hired first!