

10 Myths: Landing the Best Jobs Available in the Upstate
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So, do you feel that you should be in a better job? Why do most of us stay in the same job even when our skills are being underutilized or when we are truly unhappy? The job market in the Upstate is improving. There are many opportunities for women who are prepared and have the tools to succeed! Here they are, the top ten myths about searching for a job in the Upstate:

Myth #1: All of the good jobs are with the largest employers.

Truth: Though large employers offer tremendous benefits and growth opportunities, the majority of companies in the Upstate are classified as small businesses. There are some fantastic small employers! The experience and gratification gained by working in a small business, where you would be involved in a multitude of duties and can see your direct impact on the bottom line, may just exceed the advantages that working for a large company offers.

Myth #2: I need “roots” in the Upstate to get the best jobs.

Truth: A transplanted (excuse the term) Sandlapper who knows how to network and use that network will reap benefits that far exceed that of being born and raised here. Many of our most successful business people in the Upstate are without our unique Upstate draw! Network not only when you are looking for a job, but when you are not. A few ideas on networking opportunities: professional associations, community service organizations, non-profit business organizations such as chambers of commerce, church organizations, and neighborhood groups. Make it a point to know what people do, where they work, and who they know! Who knows, you may just make a positive impact on our wonderful community in the process!

Myth #3: Staffing companies find only temporary jobs for their clients OR Companies hire contract employees just to avoid paying benefits.

Truth: I take personal offense to this one! Most often, Upstate companies use temporary staffing agencies to recruit excellent candidates that they WILL consider for permanent full-time employment if they do a good job! If you are new to the area, working on temporary assignments is an excellent way to get a “feel” for the market and to get your foot into the door! For example, approximately 60-70% (depending on the economy and time of year) of the placements through our firm will lead to full time positions with the employer if our candidate does a super job.

Myth #4: No one finds a job through an ad in the newspaper.

Truth: Looking in the classified ads is the very best way to find out what’s hot and what’s not. If you read between the lines, you will see which firms are growing, the skills they are looking for, industry trends, and the types of jobs that staffing agencies work.

Myth #5: I should prepare one good cover letter and resume and send it to the top fifty companies for whom I’d like to work.

Truth: This is one of the biggest mistakes most job seekers make! Each cover letter and resume must be tailored to the position for which you are applying. Depending on the position, you must change your objective, the placement of your skills, education, and job history. Your cover letter should not be written to “Dear Sir or Madam” or “Dear Sir” but to a specific individual. If the newspaper ad doesn’t mention a name, find the person to whom you should direct your letter by calling the company and asking, “Who is the person responsible for hiring the _____ position?” Please don’t waste your time with a generic marketing package.

Myth #6: If they tell me they’ll call me when a decision is made, they will.

Truth: Call it today’s hectic business environment, call it understaffing in HR departments, call it impoliteness, but it’s a fact. If you don’t follow up, you may never hear back. During the interview, ask the employer when they expect to make a decision. If you haven’t heard from the employer by the date that they mention—call them! When you call, let them know that you are interested and ask what additional information they need from you in order to make a decision. If

they do not need further information, ASK FOR THE JOB! Most people can't or won't do it, but the candidate's ability to "close the deal" will be the deciding factor in many hiring decisions. Companies want to hire people who are qualified and interested. Frankly, I wouldn't hire a salesperson who couldn't sell themselves. Here is how it's done: "Ms. Employer, I have found out a great deal about your company, both prior to meeting with you and during the interview process. You have also learned a great deal about me, my background, and skills. I know that I am a good fit for the position, and I will do a good job for you. I want to come to work for your organization, when can I start?" If they "hem and haw", ask them if there is other information that they need to make a decision. If so, provide it, and then close again.

Myth #7: The company that I am interviewing with has a casual environment, so I don't need to dress up for the interview.

Truth: As the old phrase goes, "You only have one chance to make a first impression!" Regardless of the employer's environment, you should dress conservatively and professionally. What does this mean? For office environments, wear a conservative dress or suit with pantyhose and professional shoes. Your hair should be clean and neat—no trendy hairstyles. Only one earring per ear, no piercings on other parts of the body that show, no midriff showing, very little jewelry, and no perfume (many people are allergic). Many women will argue that this isn't their "style" or that they like to express themselves. This is a job interview. This is a time when you want the interviewer to concentrate on your experience and abilities. You do not want to present yourself in a way that will distract the interviewer from you! So, unless you are applying for a position as a fashion model, please keep it conservative.

Myth #8: When I receive an offer from a company, it's "take it or leave it"

Truth: Women, especially Southern women, have been raised to be polite and non-confrontational. Though this attribute has served us well, we will never excel in our careers if we do not ask for what we need and expect more! Here is what the employer doesn't want you to know: there is almost always a range of pay for each position in a company. The wage for a new employee is dependent on their prior experience, prior pay, internal equity (what other employees at the company are earning), and what the candidate negotiates, among other factors. Women should feel comfortable negotiating their wage, vacation, and other benefits within *reasonable* limits. If an employer does not have the ability to raise the starting pay, negotiate a review period of three to six months after the start date. By the time you have been with your new firm for three to six months, you will have proved your value. Asking for this consideration will show the employer that you are willing to *earn* your wage increase. Candidates who have a stable work history, excellent skills, and a positive attitude are valuable in this marketplace regardless of the economy. Don't sell yourself short!

Myth #9: Because of the economic downturn, this is not a good time to look for a job.

Truth: If you are unhappy in your current situation, have stopped learning, or your skills are underutilized, it is the time to look. I will argue that it is more critical for companies to have the very best employees possible in lean times. After all, many firms are running leaner, which places a larger responsibility on each employee. Profit margins are tight, and the situation requires excellence from each staff member. Even companies who are in a downsizing mode will experience attrition in key positions. If the executive assistant to the president of a company leaves due to her husband's relocation, will he do without a support person? I don't think so! If a top salesperson leaves a firm to go to a competitor, will they lie back and let that person take their business? No way—they'll hire a better salesperson! There are opportunities out there if you make the effort to find them and present yourself in the best possible light.

Myth #10: I should be upfront and honest about my personal problems during my interview.

Truth: Honest, yes—but tell everything, no! I can say this because I am a woman: this is the biggest mistake that women make during the interview. By nature, many of us are friendly and open, so we let down our guard too easily. The interviewer's job is to screen you out. Their job is to find out, prior to hiring you, if you will be undependable, difficult to get along with, or a "short

timer.” Don’t give them a reason not to hire you. The interviewer does not (under normal circumstances) need to know about your sick family members, future plans for having children, past disagreements with coworkers or supervisors, or other personal issues. Don’t speak negatively about your former job or employer, even if you feel they will understand. Trust me, many of you reading this have probably lost a wonderful job opportunity by making this mistake!