

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE
Highly Effective Job Search

**Creating a Job Search Program
In Your Church, Synagogue
Or
Community Organization**

Special Supplement to
The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search

By Orville Pierson

Note:

This Special Supplement is written exclusively for those who have already read
The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search,
including the section on Job Search Work Teams.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE
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**How to Create A Job Search Assistance Program
In Your Organization**

- 1. Set up a team program.**
- 2. Offer training sessions.**
- 3. Organize staffing.**
- 4. Create a directory of resource people.**
- 5. Teach job seekers to work with the community.**
- 6. Teach the community to work with job seekers.**
- 7. Publicize successes.**
- 8. Formalize support from team alumni.**

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

Creating a Job Search Program In Your Church, Synagogue or Community Organization

By Orville Pierson, author of
The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search

Part of my career in job search assistance has long been designing job search assistance programs for large numbers of people, in the permanent offices of career transition firms and in the temporary career centers often set up to assist large numbers of people released by large employers in a downsizing. A single career center facility can provide services for hundreds of unemployed people.

In this special section I am drawing on my career center experience and translating it for smaller volunteer-led programs. While no one likes to think about a large number of people being unemployed all at once, there are advantages in working with larger groups to get them back to work.

A steady flow of people into Job Search Work Teams (described in *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*) produces a more rapid flow of people into new jobs, because team members help each other get back to work more quickly than individuals can do on their own. So as long as there are not too many people (i.e., dozens or hundreds) with the same former job title looking for work in the same small town, the process actually works better with more people.

I particularly like to work with such programs because the only thing that makes me happier than seeing one unemployed person find a great new job is seeing a dozen or a hundred unemployed people find great new jobs.

I also enjoy seeing people help each other in the process. Unemployed people sometimes start out with a “competitive” mentality – thinking that they have to compete with others for a limited number of jobs. Sometimes they are initially unwilling to share anything about their search.

But as they better understand the hiring process, they see that the idea of competing for jobs is more of a red herring than a real concern. This is especially true in organizational cultures where people behave ethically and have a high level of trust in each other. Organized cooperation between unemployed people can make it easier for everyone without harming anyone.

In this section, I’ll show you how to set up this kind of organized cooperation, using the eight steps listed on page 2, above.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

How many people do you need for your program?

A comprehensive program like the one I will describe is usually worth doing only in larger organizations. If your organization has 500 members who are normally employed and there is a 5% unemployment rate, you would expect to have 25 unemployed members at any one time. Since some lucky people will immediately find new jobs and some will not choose to participate, you might then have one team of 12 or two smaller teams operating on an ongoing basis.

Teams below four members do not function well, and if you have that few people unemployed, congratulations. This is probably not the right program for you – unless you want to join forces with another organization.

On the other hand, if your organization routinely has a dozen or more people in job search, this program is ideal. It provides outstanding support using an all volunteer staff – and makes excellent use of those resources by focusing them primarily on working with groups rather than with individuals one at a time. Because it is primarily a do-it-yourself program, it also emphasizes team members helping each other – which reduces staffing needs.

You do not need to use all elements of this comprehensive program, and certainly should not try to get them all working in the first month. Select the elements that fit your situation the best and start with them. Add others later if you want to. We'll start with the basic elements.

1. Set up a Job Search Work Team (JSWT) program.

Select team leaders.

Use multiple teams if needed.

Link the teams to organization's culture.

Since the JSWT is the core of the program, setting up one or more teams is the first step. Read *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*, and follow the instructions in the book's special section on JSWTs. If you can get committed volunteer leaders who are not looking for new employment themselves, this will produce the strongest program. If those leaders have some related skills and stay in the role for an extended period they will become a significant assets to the program.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

Everything described in this section can be done by volunteers with no prior experience in job search assistance – provided that they are willing to commit some time and energy to it and perhaps read some books. Experience in job search assistance or a related field such as human resources, recruiting, teaching/training or organizational management is very useful, but not necessary.

Multiple teams

If you have multiple teams with multiple long-term leaders (not themselves looking for employment), the leaders will learn even faster by having periodic meetings themselves. They may also sometimes observe each other's teams and offer each other feedback on how the team and leader are with putting the program described in this book into action. Larger, multi-team programs usually need an overall coordinator, who can be one of the team leaders.

On the other hand, teams led by unemployed team members will also function effectively, if they closely follow all facets of the Pierson Method. Again, periodic team leader meetings are useful, to share information and resources between teams in multiple team programs.

Any program with multiple teams should set up committees shared by all teams that use the most experienced and knowledgeable members of any team. In all of this, it is very important that unemployed people taking leadership roles in a program do not exceed their four hours per week, since their main job is job search.

A job search assistance program can be sponsored jointly by two or more organizations in order to gain the economies of scale and expanded resources that go with multiple team programs. With smaller organizations, joint organizational sponsorship is a way to create a single-team program.

Multiple teams create additional networking resources

If your program has multiple teams, you may want to consider linking them to extend the networking reach of all team members. This can be organized by team leaders in their periodic meetings, or by an overall program coordinator, if you have one.

One way to do this is to invite one or two people from other teams to visit and participate in a meeting. These visits need to be limited so that the team being visited will not be disrupted. Team members are generally pleased to be introduced to other people who are likely to be additional resources for them. The visitors report back to their own teams and connect teammates with members of other teams who share their interests or Target Markets.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

Another possibility is an occasional joint meeting, held in addition to the normal team meetings. A useful structure for the joint meeting is to go around the room with three-minute introductions including Professional Objectives, Target Markets and several priority targets. During these introductions, participants should briefly note when they have information that will help someone else. After these introductions, there should be a time for people to talk informally. Exchanging Project Plans, Target Lists and resumes can also be useful. None of this should be attempted until individual teams are well established.

Multiple team programs also benefit from having a bulletin board for sharing information between teams. This may be on local employers, community resources, educational opportunities or anything else. Such a bulletin board can be physical, or if everyone has Internet access, virtual.

A posted, ongoing list of alumni is also useful. You can use a JSWT Wall Chart to list the names of alumni along with their final cumulative numbers from their Pierson Progress Charts (an item in the Final Report to the Team). The longer this list gets, the more educational and inspirational value it has for new members. Team alumni are usually very willing to help team members, and skilled in doing so.

Link the team to the culture

There are numerous ways a JSWT can reflect and reinforce the culture of the organization sponsoring it. In religious organizations, for example, starting or ending team meetings with prayer is an obvious possibility. In community organizations, teams may be formally linked to other organizational or community resources. Another commonly used element is having each team name itself. These team names are necessary in multiple team programs, and can reflect facets of the larger culture.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

2. Offer training sessions for team members:

The Pierson Method
The Seven Search Techniques
Career planning
Resume writing
Research
Interviewing
Salary negotiations

While training team members in search skills and techniques is not necessary, it makes for a stronger program because it speeds the learning process. Team members will learn these skills and techniques from each other over time and by reading books. But classroom training adds another dimension, if the program is large enough to justify it. These training sessions should always be separate from the weekly JSWT meetings.

The most important areas for training are the performance skills that cannot be learned as well in the JSWT because actual practice is required. The most important of these is interviewing. While planning a Core Message is a first step in this, learning should move to creating accomplishment stories that illustrate key competencies and then to using these stories in conversation and responding to questions.

While role-playing interview practice sessions are a bit artificial, the only alternative is having team members practice in real interviews, which will almost certainly result in some lost opportunities. Effective training sessions usually involve teaching general principles, preparing answers to predictable questions, and practicing in groups of three where there is an interviewer, an interviewee and an observer who praises effective performance and gives one or two suggestions for improvement.

Salary negotiations and resume writing also involve skills that can be honed by group discussion, practice and feedback. Career planning, discussed in chapter 6 of *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*, can be supported in group sessions that teach approaches to it and include interactive exercises aimed at clarifying interests and values as well as defining and documenting skills. This work on defining skills lays the groundwork for more effective interviewing and should precede interviewing training if both are offered.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

Research on companies and industries can be learned from books and team discussion, as can most of the Seven Search Techniques and the Pierson Method. Nonetheless, offering training in them can accelerate learning, and make it more likely that each participant learns the essentials early on.

3. Organize staffing for the program:

Trainers
Subject matter experts
Individual coaches
Career counselors
Personal counselors

If you are considering a program that includes training, the obvious question is who will be the teacher. One solution is to have team members with relevant knowledge and experience conduct trainings. Members with some teaching or presentation ability can also research and study a particular job search subject and prepare a training. This is an opportunity for team members to increase their knowledge on a search related area that will make them more effective in their own search.

Training sessions

Such training sessions can be as short as 15 minutes or as long as a full day – with anywhere from a half dozen to 25 people attending. Smaller groups have the advantage of facilitating discussion and questions and answer sessions. Larger multi-team programs may need larger training sessions. Training sessions should always be separate from the weekly JSWT meetings.

Another staffing strategy is to look for members of the church, synagogue or community organization who are subject matter experts and willing to volunteer. A recruiter, human resources professional, or outplacement consultant for example, might be a good instructor on interviewing or resume writing. These experts may also be tapped to provide one-to-one coaching from time to time.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

One-to-one coaching

Resume writing, salary negotiations and interviewing are the three areas where one-to-one assistance is most useful. With resume writing, one-to-one work following a Project Plan and resume class and production of a first draft is the most time-efficient approach. One-to-one coaching during a process of interviewing for and negotiating a new job can be extremely valuable, helping to cultivate offers and sometimes shape them into better offers.

Another area where one-to-one assistance can be used to good effect is career counseling. While this takes a higher level of skill and experience, it is a great addition to a program if you can find the right person. Personal (or spiritual) counseling is sometimes also needed to help people deal with the stresses of unemployment and job search.

All of this staffing is very useful when it is available. But remember that you do not have to have it. Job Search Work Teams are designed so that members will do most of this for each other, through committees and informally. And team alumni are often more than willing to help out once a program has existed long enough to have them.

4. Create a directory of resource people familiar with –

Jobs and qualifications for them
Organizations and industries
Education and training
Search skills and techniques
The employment process

When a job search assistance program has a volunteer staff, they may work many hours a week or only a few hours a month. A variation of volunteer staffers is resource people, whose contribution does not need to be on a regular basis. These are people with useful information or expertise who are willing to be contacted from time to time (perhaps only a few times a year) to share some of what they know.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

One category of resource people is the kind already discussed – those with expertise in human resources, recruiting or outplacement. Rather than volunteer as staff members for the program, these people can simply serve as “go-to” people when someone has a relevant question.

The category could also include librarians or expert Internet users who know how to locate information on targeted employers. It could include educators who know what is the best academic or training preparation for certain jobs and how to get it. The selection of resource people results from an understanding of what your particular group of unemployed people need.

Anyone can be a resource person

Resource people can also be people who know certain professions, such as a nurse who has worked in hospitals and knows not only the nursing profession but also a number of other healthcare professions and hospital jobs – and could advise people wanting to enter the field. Someone who has worked in manufacturing has a familiarity with manufacturing jobs and what it takes to succeed in them. An administrative assistant could describe that career and the required qualifications. A senior manager or administrator often knows a very wide range of positions and is usually an excellent mentor for those seeking mid- or lower level jobs.

Another kind of resource person is one who is familiar with certain organizations – a school system, a large business or the U. S. Postal Service, for instance – because he or she has worked there or works there now. This kind of resource person can help with the ins and outs of what it is like to work there, who is in charge of what, the qualifications for various jobs and how hiring is done.

A directory or database of any or all of these resource people in a religious or community organization can be very useful to job seekers in that organization. At the same time, there need to be some controls on how it is used, so that people listed in the directory are not overworked or inadvertently put in an awkward position.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

5. Teach job seekers to work with the community.

- Set expectations and boundaries.**
- Use written meeting guidelines.**

The simplest way to control use of a directory or database of resource people is not to make it public, but to put it in the hands of a single individual who connects job seekers with resource people, instructs job seekers on how to behave in such meeting, and keeps track of how often each resource person is used.

If such a directory is made available to all team members, it is important to be sure that all team members understand its proper use: resource people are sources of information to create and implement an effective Project Plan. Information from resource people can be particularly helpful in selecting an appropriate Professional Objective, understanding what qualifications are most important for that kind of job, creating a Target List and understanding the organizations on that list.

Team members working with resource people must also understand what is *not* appropriate: expecting the resource person to hire them or advocate for them in with an employer. While a resource person may sometimes choose to do this, it is not a reasonable expectation on the part of the job hunter. The job hunter should not request anything that could make the resource person uncomfortable. There is a set of suggested Guidelines for Networking Meetings available free from highlyeffectivejobsearch.com.

6. Teach the community to work with job seekers.

- Use written meeting guidelines.**
- Create a directory of job seekers.**

Just as job seekers are taught to have effective job search conversations with members of the community sponsoring the JSWT program, community members can be instructed in how to most effectively support job seekers. This can be done through announcements in general meetings and guidelines to set the right expectations and appropriate boundaries.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

The easiest way to make networking meetings within an organization or community work is to make the job seeker responsible for bringing the written Guidelines for Networking Meetings (from highlyeffectivejobsearch.com) to each meeting. Members of the community (or congregation) can then be instructed: Always use these Guidelines to structure the meeting, and never have a meeting unless the job seeker brings the Guidelines.

After a time, everyone will have enough experience in such meetings to be very effective, and team members will learn how to do meetings with non-community members without guidelines.

Using written guidelines for such a meeting may seem overly formal. But they are very important to the success of the program. Job seekers and those trying to help them both have a tendency to focus too much on job openings rather than information. Resource people often feel that they have to connect the job seeker to an opening or provide introductions whether those are appropriate or not.

Written guidelines help to keep expectations to a more realistic level. They focus both parties on the full range of useful activities, and help avoid the pitfalls that can damage relationships and the job search assistance program.

If these meetings are awkward and difficult for either party, the word will get out about this, and fewer meetings will happen. On the other hand, if the meetings are pleasant and productive, then more meetings will happen and job seekers will find jobs faster.

Create a directory of job seekers

Job hunting is not always fun, and job seekers sometimes find it difficult to reach out to as many people as they need to in order to succeed. A directory of job seekers shows community members who need help, so they can volunteer if they want to.

This kind of directory should include a simple version of each job seeker's Project Plan (and even a sample Target List), so people can see what kind of work they are looking for and what kind of employers they are interested in. And it should include phone numbers and e-mail addresses, so people wanting to help can initiate contact.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

7. Publicize successes.

**Use the Final Report to the Team.
Make announcements to the whole community.
Create channels for celebration and recognition.**

In any formal job search assistance program, it is very important to recognize and celebrate success. This helps job seekers by giving them concrete evidence that people can and do find jobs, even in weak job markets. It also allows those who assisted in any way to see the fruits of their contributions – and maybe make them more likely to assist the next person.

Recognizing success and learning from it is part of the Job Search Work Team design and takes place mainly in the Final Reports to the Team (see pages 273-274 of *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*). Final Reports to the team should be posted for members of all teams to see in a multi-team program.

In a church, synagogue or community program, it is also important to reach out to the larger group with public announcements of success, including new job title and organization, as well as a message from the newly employed person.

This brief message may include parts of the Final Report to the Team and should certainly include recognition of people who assisted in the success.

Some organizations may also want to periodically have a celebration of recent successes that include a group larger than the individual's teammates. At such an event, recognition of staff members, resource people and others who helped is very important to the continued success of the program.

Finally, sharing successes beyond the boundaries of your organization can help unemployed people everywhere get back to work faster. The Search Stories section of the *highlyeffectivejobsearch.com* Web site offers ways to do this if participants are willing to devote a few minutes to it.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF THE **Highly Effective Job Search**

8. Formalize support from team alumni.

**Alumni can become staff members or resource people,
But do not risk their success in their new jobs.**

No one understands the value of job search assistance programs better than someone who has found a great new job through one. Program alumni are also knowledgeable on how job search works. Because they have succeeded, they can be very effective at encouraging others, as well as instructing and assisting them.

Team alumni can fulfill any of the roles discussed in this section – from team leader to resource person. Sometimes they are particularly good at motivating new team members and at encouraging non-members to join the program.

Never jeopardize an alumni's new job

In using JSWT alumni in a job search assistance program, it is very important that all involved protect the alumni's new employment. For most people in most new jobs, there is an adjustment period of three to six months. During this time, the new employee usually needs to pay particular attention to learning the job and the organization as well as to exhibiting top performance. All of this can take extraordinary time and energy.

Therefore, even though the alumni may be enthusiastic about “giving back” to the program that helped them, the program should make sure the person is fully established in their new job before putting them into any role in the new program that takes significant time and energy.

Alumni can become the backbone of the program

When a program's alumni group gets large enough, alumni can become the backbone of the program. They understand it and have acquired the skills needed for success and understand the emotional ups and downs of a search. If you can find the staffing to get a program through its first year, it tends to become self-sustaining, as alumni become staffers.