

Situation-Wanted Advertisements: A Means for Obtaining Job Inquiries and Offers

Susan C. Willis
Virginia Department of Transportation

Thomas A. Miller
Memorial Hospital

Greg Huff
Southwestern Training Center

The effectiveness of placing situation-wanted advertisements in publications as a means of obtaining employment was investigated. Questionnaires concerning situation-wanted ads were sent to 253 job seekers who had placed such ads. The questionnaire, which was printed on a return addressed, postage-paid postcard, resulted in 69 responses. The results of the survey indicated that situation-wanted ads are an effective job search process as 68.1% of people running the ads received inquiries and 13% received job offers as a result of the advertisement. The more publications in which the advertisement appeared, the more inquiries ($r = .48$) and job offers ($r = .37$) the applicant received.

The search for a job can be a very long and complicated process. Many authors of books on job hunting inform readers that the job search process is (or should be) a campaign to sell themselves, and that frequently this is the most important sale of their life (Rust, 1979; Wallace, Miller, & Bustin, 1982; Cohen, 1978). Due to this importance of selling oneself effectively, a number of techniques have been suggested to help accomplish this task. Although many books have been written on the best way

to obtain a good job (and most agree on the various methods), little research has been done to support these ideas. The best support for these methods is their high success rate in securing the desired jobs.

The most reliable method of finding a job thus far is the process of networking (Payne, 1979). Networking can be either an informal or formal process. Informal networking is learning of jobs via word-of-mouth, through personal contacts. Formal networking is learning of jobs by joining local chapters of professional and business organizations that are interesting to the job seeker (Wallace, Miller, & Bustin, 1982). Networking involves searching for that illusive "hidden" job market. It is estimated that four out of five job openings are never publicized, therefore one must "network" to find out about these openings (Catalyst, 1981).

Several other options exist that can be used in addition to the resume and networking plan. It is important to note that the more methods used in the job search, the better the chances of receiving the right job offer (Pilder & Pilder, 1981). One of the options is information interviews. This option became popular through its foremost proponent, in his best selling book on job hunting *What Color is Your Parachute* (Bolles, 1984).

In an information interview, the job seeker makes an appointment with managers of departments in corporations to find out "... what they know and how they learned it" (Catalyst, 1981). This interview serves two purposes: it allows the job seeker to receive much needed information on the job market and it provides the job seeker with an influential contact.

Another method of job hunting is mass mailings of resumes. The odds of this approach working are rather slim unless the job seeker is highly qualified and sends out a multitude of letters and resumes (Lathrop, 1980). Researching the companies and preparing a list of companies that could possibly have a job opening is a must if this method is employed (Lathrop, 1980).

One method that has not received much attention is the "situation-wanted" advertisement or "position wanted" advertisement. A few authors have offered comments about this form of job hunting. For example, Lewis and Lewis (1982) suggest that the ad should be run in a trade journal rather than in a local newspaper and that the ad should be both brief and comprehensive. The staff of Catalyst (1981) have stated that "... if you like to cover every base, try it. The cost of the ad is sometimes tax deductible, and you will probably get at least one response -- form an employment agency. (For obvious reasons, you make a good prospect.)"

However, most authors advise not wasting money on this type of

campaign to sell the job seeker's abilities (Bolles, 1984; Payne, 1979). Though most authors have negative opinions about situation-wanted ads, no research has been performed to support these negative opinions. Thus, it was the purpose of this study to determine the effectiveness of placing situation wanted-ads.

METHOD

Subjects

A letter was mailed to 253 individuals who had placed a situation-wanted advertisement in a local or national publication. Sixty-nine individuals responded, 55 of which were males between the ages of 23 and 62 and 14 of which were females between the ages of 28 and 62. Fourteen of the respondents had earned a doctoral degree, 26 a Master's degree, 23 a Bachelors's degree, and five a high school diploma.

Questionnaire

A letter was sent to each participant indicating the purpose of the study. This letter included a postage-paid postcard with eight questions to be answered. These eight questions sought information about the gender and age of the subject, highest level of education completed, number of publications in which the advertisement was placed, type of publication, number of times the advertisement was run, number of inquiries received from the advertisement, and the number of job offers that resulted from the advertisement.

Procedure

Situation-wanted advertisements were selected from the following sources: *Wall Street Journal*, the American Psychological Association's *Monitor*, the National Association of Social Worker's *News*, *National Cities Weekly*, *National Catholic Reader*, *Roanoke Times and World News*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the American Society for Personnel Administration's *Resource*, *Women's Wear Daily*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Automotive News*. Advertisements were selected from issues which has been published between one and six months prior to the study.

RESULTS

The majority of respondents reported receiving some type of inquiry from their advertisement, with a small percentage of the inquiries leading to a job offer. As shown in Table 1, 68% of the respondents received some form of inquiry, ranging from recruiters and employment agencies to fellow applicants and employers.

Table 1

Number of Inquiries

Number of Inquiries	Frequency	Percent
0	22	31.9
1	11	15.9
2	9	13.0
3	8	11.6
4	4	5.8
5	5	7.2
6	2	4.3
7	1	1.4
10	2	2.9
12	2	2.9
40	1	1.4
74	1	1.4
	69	

As shown in Table 2, 13% of the respondents received job offers as a result of their advertisement.

Table 2

Number of Job Offers

Number of Job Offers	Frequency	Percent
0	60	87.0
1	5	7.2
3	1	1.4
5	2	2.9
15	1	1.4
	69	

Correlational analysis revealed a significant relationship between the number of publications in which an advertisement was placed and both the number of inquiries received ($r = .48, P < .0001$) and the number of job offers received ($r = .37, P < .002$). There was no significant relationships involving the age or gender of the subject and the number of inquiries or job offers.

DISCUSSION

Authors of books concerning job hunting techniques tend to question the effectiveness of placing situation wanted advertisements as a means of finding a job. To date, no research had shown if this negative opinion is warranted. The results of this study indicated that placing situation-wanted ads may be useful, and if a job applicant wants to receive more inquiries and possible job offers, than he or she should place the ads in a large number of publications.

Although only 13% of the respondents received a job offer, this figure indicated that, at the very least, the advertisements are being monitored

by prospective employers. Additional studies concerning the effectiveness of situation-wanted ads should investigate who the inquiries were from (e.g. other job seekers, employment agencies), the type of job offers received, and the most effective type of publication in which to place the ad.

This study is highly relevant to job hunting techniques. Because this is the first research concerning situation-wanted advertisements, the findings have posed several questions that remain to be answered. As many authors have indicated, the best method for securing employment is the use of a variety of job hunting techniques. Our research suggests that situation-wanted advertisements placed in a variety of relevant publications may result in job inquiries and offers.

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