

You'll still have to compete in a candidate's market

By JOEY FITZPATRICK Personal Finance

WITH OLDER workers retiring in record numbers, the **law of supply and demand** is tilting the Canadian labour market in favour of the job seeker. And that trend seems sure to continue. **Some analysts have predicted that by 2016, as many as three million jobs will go unfilled in Canada because of a lack of skilled workers.**

That being said, there is still fierce competition for the desirable jobs because of a globalized economy and the presence of immigrants from all over the world.

"Although it's a candidate's market, they still have to compete," says Lisa Ludmer, director of permanent and professional services with the human resources firm Adecco. "The immigrants coming to Canada are highly skilled and highly educated."

She encourages young people to get out and travel, to volunteer and become involved in activities and issues that interest them. **Companies are looking for diversity, both in work background and in personal experience.**

"You really have to broaden your range of experiences," she says.

The job search process has moved far beyond dropping off resumes and waiting for the phone to ring. Candidates are using all their social networks, as well as online networks such as **LinkedIn**, Facebook and Craigslist. The **importance of networking** becomes clear when you consider that up to 80 per cent of all job openings are not even posted. This hidden job market is spread by word of mouth.

Another strategy is the employment proposal. You introduce yourself as a solution to a company's problem, presenting an opportunity for an organization to be more effective or profitable. Write a proposal to an organization that interests you, demonstrating how you and your project or idea could help them achieve their goals.

As with any successful endeavour, a job search should begin with preparation and planning. Research is critical. If you're interested in working for a company, take a close look at the organization's website, including the "About" or "Organization" sections. Do a quick Internet search on the organization, sector, issue or role. Visit the library or a bookstore. The information you pick up could prove invaluable even if you don't get hired for the particular position.

The research will also give you insight into the organization's corporate culture.

"Money is always negotiable," Ludmer points out. "But skills, experience and cultural fit are non-negotiable."

A resume should be targeted to a specific position within an organization. Ask for a copy of the job description and clearly show how you meet the qualifications and skills required by the job. Remember that resumes are often simply used as a screening device. That is, they will be given perhaps a 30-second glance to determine whether the candidate is even in the running. So keep it brief and list your **key qualification** statements in bullet form near the top.

A good cover letter will highlight those skills, experience and fit. The cover letter will be the first impression you make on the potential employer and will demonstrate how well you communicate in writing. It should anticipate the employer's questions, such as: Why are you interested in this job? Why would you be able to succeed in this position? What steps would you be prepared to take to overcome any missing skills or roadblocks?

"Job candidates have to take a very proactive role," Ludmer says. "They have to market themselves to companies that have a need for their skills and experience."

