

Strong employees always needed

By Anne Messenger
Contributing writer

At the beginning of a new year, as we emerge from a difficult economy, it may be helpful to step back and look at a larger picture.

Doing that sometimes lifts me above distracting details and shakes me out of tunnel vision into a world of possibility.

It can be uncomfortable, even unnerving.

Occasionally, though, there's an enlightening "aha" moment that makes me wonder why I don't take the time to do it more. So here goes.

Things are looking up. That's the good news. Economic indicators have shifted and point in a more hopeful direction than last year at this time. Employers are listing more jobs and people are getting more jobs, at every level. It's not happening as fast as we'd like, but it's happening.

The other news is that things have changed in the employment world. There are more contract and "temp to perm" jobs. Sometimes, it seems that ever daunting technology rules. Benefits are not necessarily an immediate given. A CEO's average stay is three years and a line worker's formerly steady job is subject to global competition.

But here's the thing: There is always a need for strong employees.

Even in times of highest unemployment, people find jobs. Those who have been able to develop their strengths and communicate compellingly about their accomplishments are the winners. They understand that instead of guaranteed, stable employment, change is today's constant. They're willing, even eager, to learn and flexible enough to adapt. They step up to a challenge, seize every opportunity for training and equip themselves with tools to move on if necessary.

The trick is figuring out how to apply this new world of employment to a job search. Five things I'd do if I were looking:

1. Get financially positioned. Consumer Credit Counseling can be a great help in digging out

of debt or establishing ways to cut spending.

2. Set up a plan and work it. This can be a simple, weekly 1-2-3 checklist or a full Excel spreadsheet. The point is, write it down, commit to it and then, I repeat, work it.

3. Put networking at the top of the to-do list. Start with one solid contact a week for a month. The formula: contact + well thought out message + thanks = visibility + results.

4. Explore local resources. Free ones include Onondaga County's libraries, CNY Works and this very MoneyWise series — there are many good articles with useful advice (www.syracuse.com/job-advice). Consider hiring a career adviser.

5. Take 10 minutes to set up a LinkedIn account. Spend one to two hours a week to build online visibility. This is big — probably the biggest change I've seen in the past year for job seekers.

Nowadays, it is simply imperative to get digital.

Did I say this would be easy?

No. It's not. I know, because I've been there, done that. But I've worked for bad bosses and they're not worth it. I've lost jobs and have rebounded into better ones — way better ones.

I promise: Things are getting better. I promise: You can change if you think you can. I promise: Do the work, and work will come.

About Anne Messenger:

Messenger is president of Messenger Associates Inc., specialists in career management, with offices in Manlius and Binghamton. She is a recognized career strategist and Senior Professional of Human Resources.

Before starting MAI in 1997, she was a marketing executive at DBM, a career transition firm. She managed outplacement for Lockheed Martin Corp. in Salina where she also headed a development design team. She also served as executive director of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Private Industry Council, an oversight body for federal job-training programs.

A Wellesley College graduate, Messenger is active with the Women Presidents' Organization as a founder and chair of its Syracuse chapter. She is a winner of numerous business and community awards. Her career tips are available on her company blog, [http://messengerassociates.wordpress.com/\(Z\)](http://messengerassociates.wordpress.com/(Z)); or on Twitter, [http://twitter.com/annemessenger/\(Z\)](http://twitter.com/annemessenger/(Z));



