

# Conscious Careering

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**Tempted to invest in one of the “get hired quick” services out there? Buyer beware!**

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You know the old saying “If it’s too good to be true, it probably is?” Sadly, during economic times like these, job hunters of all persuasion should tape this mantra up in a prominent place as they go about their employment search efforts. Failing to do so could easily lead an otherwise-savvy professional to succumb to temptation—and fall prey to one of the numerous career-related scams lurking out there in today’s market, seeking to part unwary job hunters from their hard-earned money.

Having observed the career services landscape for a great many years now, in fact, I’d point to three categories of service (which I’ll outline in a moment) that tend to be the most ripe for fraud, exploitation, and abuse. Sure, there may certainly be some companies in these sectors that offer a legitimate service, at a fair price, but I’d still urge job hunters to exercise ample due diligence when dealing with firms in these particular genres. By and large, many of these services are the job market equivalent of “get rich quick” schemes or the diet fads that promise you’ll lose 50 pounds if you simply eat grapefruit...or take this pill...or attach electrodes to your abdomen. They lure thousands of people in with slick claims and promises, but at the end of the day, common sense must prevail. If getting a great job (or losing weight) only required three easy payments of \$19.95, after all, wouldn’t everybody be doing it?

So if you’re in the process of seeking a new opportunity and are tempted by websites touting access to exclusive job leads, inside contacts, or the “hidden” job market, I’d advise you to keep your guard up...high. Such firms often fall into one of three common categories:

## **1. Resume Mass-Distribution Services.**

This first breed of firm consists of those websites offering to blast, zap, blitz, and/or shotgun your resume out to thousands of employers and recruiters in one fell swoop. Such sites have popped up like rabbits in recent years, and frankly, I haven’t heard a single account of them ever producing a viable job opportunity. This isn’t surprising, really, when you think about it. If you were in a hiring role, after all, would *you* want to be flooded with thousands of unsolicited resumes from random candidates? Or would

you have your legal department quickly file for a cease-and-desist order? What’s more, if you ask to preview the list of companies these services are proposing to contact on your behalf, I can pretty much guarantee you’ll be disappointed at the lack of accuracy—and relevance—of the data you’re given. I evaluated the list of Washington State recruiters one service was using, for example, and hadn’t heard of a full 70% of the firms in question, even though I’ve been tracking the Washington State staffing market closely for more than a decade!

**2. Fee-Based Employment Websites.** The second category of service that I’d urge caution around are those employment websites that charge a fee to you, the job seeker. In general, any service that has any “special magic” to offer in terms of matching candidates to positions is going to have a business model that derives revenues from the employer side of the equation, not from the pockets of job applicants, themselves. Additionally, the claims some sites make of having large numbers of “exclusive” jobs are almost always bogus—since most employers aren’t going to put all their eggs in one basket and most enterprising job seekers can find the exact same leads elsewhere, for free.

**3. Career Marketing Firms.** This last service niche encompasses those firms that charge several thousand dollars—up to \$25,000 in some cases—with the promise to “professionally market” job hunters and greatly boost their success rate. Be very, very cautious when dealing with firms that follow this model. There are countless stories of job hunters who pay these exorbitant fees, only to discover later that the fine print of the contract has entitled them to nothing more than a remedial burst of resume help and some lackluster mass-mailing support. Some of the more notorious firms in this field, in fact, change their names every few years to stay ahead of the state Attorney Generals that are starting to go after them—as well as to prevent job hunters from Googling them by name and turning up negative reviews on their service!

So at the end of the day, while there are definitely some resources worth paying for when you’re in career transition, it’s wise to follow a “caveat emptor” strategy at all times to avoid being taken to the cleaners. Want a better way to spend that \$30 per month? Take a few of the most connected folks in your network out for coffee and ask them to help you with some targeted referrals or introductions. In the long run, it’s usually a far smarter investment!

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