

# The Five O'Clock News®

from America's Premier Career-Coaching and Outplacement Service

\$4.95

January 2006

A Publication of The Five O'Clock Club®—www.FiveOClockClub.com

Vol. 20, No. 1

*"One organization with a long record of success in helping people find jobs is The Five O'Clock Club."*

FORTUNE

## Career Tips for 2006

### How to Stay on the Cutting Edge



**T**he job market has changed considerably in the last five years. As the economy improves more jobs are becoming available, more businesses are hiring and workers can prepare to trade up or change careers for the first time since the millennium.

A changing job market – one that has recovered significantly – gives workers the opportunity to reassess goals, satisfaction and salaries in an atmosphere where employers will be competing for their services. In several key sectors, notably advertising, financial services, real estate and insurance, large numbers of open jobs are chasing scarce numbers of applicants.

There is enough breathing room in the economy today so that employees can now re-evaluate their directions, their decisions and their salaries. After keeping our noses to the grindstone through years of recession and retrenchment, 2006 will be a break-out year for job seekers.

As the job market turns away from being a buyers' market, we advise job seekers to:

- **Re-assess what you enjoy doing and do well.** There is enough room in the market to follow your dreams (from sales to teaching or from finance to not-for-profits). Fifty-eight percent of those coming to The Five O'Clock Club are making a career change; changing their industry they work in or the kind of job they are doing.
- **Don't only target hot industries.** Industries get hot and cold without much warning. Things have a way of cycling up and down. Take nursing, for example. A shortage now has caused a massive increase in nursing school applicants and is likely to result in a glut.
- **Get active in industry associations.** Target those industries you are interested in pursuing and find out what's happening.
- **Go on informational interviews.** Tell people you are simply exploring so you can plan for your future. If you have your eye on a specific organization or two, make inroads. Get to know the people. If they ask why you're leaving, say, "I don't

know that I am, but I've always been interested in your organization and I'd like to get to know it better." Then, stay in touch.

- **Don't jump at the first offer.** During the dot.com boom, many job hunters made inappropriate switches, trying to make millions. Some stayed with a company only six to nine months and moved when things didn't seem to be panning out. But job hopping caught up with them. Employers are wary of people who make too many moves. Try to get a number of concurrent job offers and pick the one that positions you best for the long-term rather than the one that pays the most at the time.
- **Improve your skills.** The job market has changed and so have the requirements for many jobs. Accountants need to know Sarbanes-Oxley to get ahead. Human resource professionals need to know HR metrics, and hiring managers are demanding new skills. Corporate restructurings will not end. Companies are still laying off in one section of the organization and hiring in others.
- **Become knowledgeable about your own employer.** What do your chairman and president say? What do the company website and press releases say? Find out the direction they're heading in and move your career in that new area. How? Find five or six people who work in that division or department and get to know them well. Make sure they know you and what you have to offer. Tell them you'd like to work there. Get ready for the future. Your employer will change direction and you have to be ready!

For more information on keeping your job inside, read our new book, *Navigating Your Career*. ● K.W.

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