

The Five O'Clock News[®]

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

FORTUNE



Job Hunters Mix Energy, Positive Attitude and a Proven Methodology to Land New Jobs

by David Madison, Ph.D., Director, The National Guild of Five O'Clock Club Career Coaches

The Final Interview: Outclassing the Competition

We commonly tell job hunters when they arrive at the Club, "This is like a graduate course in job hunting, so be sure study the books as if you were in graduate school." And it's true: the keys to success will be study and hard work. So it's no surprise that when Hector, during his "graduation speech" at the Club, talked about the lessons he had learned about job search. He highlighted three of them—and they made a difference in landing his new job as head of fund raising for a foundation. Hector spoke especially about the importance of becoming an expert interviewer.

The Club advises job hunters to select their targets wisely—based on solid assessment—and then rank them: try to get interviews first at C-level companies

for practice. And this was **Hector's Lesson One** learned at the Club: "**Don't interview for important jobs too soon.**" he says. "If I'd gone later on some of my interviews, I would probably have done a lot better. Toward the end, my presen-



"I'm sorry, but the only person Mr. McCoy is looking to hire right now is a good criminal defense lawyer. But I'll be happy to pass your resume on to him."

tation and positioning skills were a lot better than in the beginning." For example, with practice he learned to finesse the discussion of his departure from a former job. "I'd become so good at reciting my wonderful accomplishments that I diverted attention from some things that might have been seen as negatives."

"I diverted attention from some things that might have been seen as negatives."

Hector ranks **Lesson Two**, however, as the most valuable—and this relates to general interview attitude. "I learned to **go into these meetings thinking of myself as a consultant**—and this really did change my approach. I have a lot of years of experience, so I was often talking with people with much less experi-

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ence. People appreciated that I was a problem solver. I put myself forward as someone who could really help them.” And Hector followed the Club’s advice about capturing as much information as possible during the meetings. “I took notes. That gives you really good content for the influencing letters, which differentiate you from others. Everyone else is sending thank-you notes: ‘Thank you—it was nice meeting you.’ The influencing letter goes beyond that: ‘...this is how I can help you.’ I got great reviews on my letters—and they resulted in call-backs.”

“I had sent them my influencing letter, but I knew I had to do more. At the meeting, I handed out my strategic plan, and it blew them away.”

One of his letters resulted in the final interview with the organization that ended up hiring him. “I was told that there were two other finalists, although they said that I was the primary candidate.” But Hector didn’t take anything for granted: who knows what might happen in such a situation! “When they’re seeing two other people, and you don’t know who they are—and they’re standing between you and the job—you’re in a tough spot.

“So I reached back into my Five O’Clock Club memory bank and said to myself, ‘You’re going to have to blow them away.’ By this time they knew a lot about me, and I had sent them my influencing letter, in which I told them what I planned to do on the job. So I knew I had to do more. When the meeting started I handed out my strategic plan for accomplishing the goals we’d talked about. I said, ‘I’m glad to know that mutual interest has been established, but this is exactly how I’ll go about the job if I’m given the opportunity.’ And it did blow them away.”

Hector also learned the value of working with others at The Five

O’Clock Club. He thanked not only his small group coach, Jim Borland, but all of the other coaches whom he had heard give the weekly lectures. And he valued having other job hunters to work with.

“We were all in this together. Some of us were in job search by choice, others because companies had sent them for outplacement. But there was no talk about why it had happened.

So my **Lesson Three is use the group, and don’t let the job search get you down.**” Coach Borland com-



“He came in for an interview 3 hours ago, and I made the mistake of telling him to make himself comfortable.”

mented that Hector experienced the peaks and the valleys during his time with the Club, paid for by his former employer. One of the reasons that The Five O’Clock Club outplacement package lasts for a full year is that some clients can have a rough time of it. Hector attended the Club for 19 sessions, but when he began attending the weekly meetings consistently, beginning in July 2008, he landed his new job within seven sessions. Powerful testimony to the truth of Hector’s Lesson Three: “Use the group.”

Winning the Money Game: an HR Officer Learns New Tricks

Shouldn’t human resources professionals be experts at job search? Would it surprise you to learn that they tend to conduct poor searches?

Because their peers are folks in HR in other companies, they think they can easily find out about openings—and they search for months with meager results. Then, too, they’re confident about being résumé experts, and of course, they know a thing or two about interviewing. Usually, there’s a rude awakening.

“My Lesson Three is use the group, and don’t let the job search get you down.”

When Arthur was sent to the Club by his company for outplacement, he had been in HR for 16 years, and our methodology was an eye-opener. “I was amazed at how much I didn’t know about résumés and interviewing. Not that everything I was doing was wrong. But it made me think of how baseball pitchers get better. A pitcher can be naturally good, but if his mechanics aren’t what they should be, he has to work on the mechanics to become really good. The Five O’Clock Club methodology was what I needed to fine-tune my mechanics.” But he found that his experience with the Club reached beyond the process of getting another job: “Having been in HR for so long, **I knew other outplacement firms, but I’d never found another organization that focuses the individual on managing his or her career.** That makes a big differ-



**Jim Borland,
Five O’Clock Club Coach**

ence—thinking about your career for the long term.”

Arthur attended the Club for nine sessions before landing a new HR job with a high-end retail firm, and his immersion in the methodology and process helped to move him along. “They tell you to have fun while you’re in job search, and that’s more important than you might think, because your outlook impacts everything. Whether you’re employed or unemployed while you’re searching, you will always have an excuse to slack off during your search. It’s the holidays? There’s a good excuse to do nothing. When January comes around, it’s too cold, then March and April—well now it’s spring. July means it’s a good time to hang out at the beach. But pay attention to your group and your coach. My group coach, Chip Conlin, was always right there to hound me, ‘Are you coming to Club this week?’”

Arthur cautions that the Club doesn’t offer magic formulas. “You will get out of it what you put in. Dig into the books, understand the methodology, come to the meetings—especially when you don’t feel like attending. It’s important to keep the wind blowing behind your sails.”

“It makes a big difference when you think about your career for the long term.”

Chip Conlin has a strong HR background himself, and he admires Arthur for not getting defensive about his résumé. “Most HR folks would say, ‘What do you mean that my résumé isn’t right?’ He had a great mindset and objectivity.” Arthur says that the Club’s résumé book proved especially helpful. “I used it to help me with formatting especially. I moved away from a job description kind of résumé. I highlighted my accomplishments—and you’ve got to use the bold/underline technique to get the reader to notice what’s important. On interview after interview I heard, ‘I’ve never seen a résumé like

this before. You’ve really brought out what you’ve done.”

Arthur also upgraded his approach to interviewing. “You’re the one who has to drive the interview—don’t just sit there reacting. Drive it with your questions. Always try to keep the focus on things you want to accentuate. Maybe it was an important project you worked on. You want to weave that in. And be sure that you work hard on your influencing letters afterward. That’s a whole different approach than the thank-you letter.”

Arthur was especially gratified to put the Club’s methodology on salary negotiation to good use. “I’d never thought much in the past about negotiating money. That was one of my real weaknesses. I usually just took what was offered. But I had been unemployed for several months, and the offer was below what I had been earning. It was a real challenge for me, and it took about a week of back-and-forth discussions—but I ended up getting 5 percent more than I’d been earning.”

You can read about the Club’s Four Step Salary Negotiation method in our book, *Mastering the Interview and Winning the Money Game*.

Getting with the Program, Finally

Eric admits that he had always taken the job market for granted.

“In my 25-year career I’d never had to hunt for jobs—they just came my way.” So when he was downsized in late 2007, he thought he could coast his way into a new job in no time. His employer provided him with a one-year outplacement package with The Five O’Clock Club, but he wanted to see what he could do on his own. For a long time he assumed that a coveted job was going to come through. “I thought I was a shoo-in, and I put all my eggs in that one basket. I waited four months for it to happen.” Then he tried the Internet, which many job

hunters think can work magic. “I chased jobs. I sent out my résumé on the Internet more than a hundred times—with no results. I finally had to admit that my approach wasn’t working.”

Although Eric had made a stab at working with The Five O’Clock Club when he was first out of work, it took about seven months for him to decide it was probably worth giving a try. In hindsight, now in his new position, he recommends taking advantage of what the Club has to offer: “Read the books and follow the course. Believe in it—it really does work.”

Eric reconnected with his coach, Anita Attridge, and she insisted that he begin at the beginning, with assessment. “Anita dragged the Seven Stories Exercise out of me—kicking and screaming. I’d always fallen into positions before, without really having to sell myself. But now I know my Seven Stories, and I will always be able to use them in the future.”



Chip Conlin,
Five O’Clock Club Coach



“Since I plan on working for your company for the next 20 years, I was hoping to get all my paychecks up front.”

With the assessment as his solid foundation, Anita helped Eric to refashion his résumé, and he attacked the job market on several fronts. “Network tirelessly,” he recommends. “Don’t be afraid to let people know what you’re trying to do. Job hunting is nothing to be ashamed of, and people do want to help you.” He also launched a major targeted letter campaign to hiring managers. “After starting with my coach, I saw the value of chasing companies instead of chasing jobs. I sent out 125 letters, got 29 interviews and four offers.”

Chasing companies instead of openings meant that attending job fairs could make sense as well, although job hunters need to remain realistic about the payoff of job fairs: thousands of other candidates are wandering from booth to booth. But this turned out to be a break for Eric. His future employer was there and accepted his résumé. Eric was called in for an interview. But the happy ending didn’t just happen: he was one of 30 people interviewed and, well into the process, the company announced a head-count freeze. But Eric had broken out of his pattern of coasting into new jobs: he kept calling every couple of weeks to find out if the hiring freeze were over. Did any of the other 30 applicants follow this Five O’Clock Club advice about keeping in touch, on an on-going basis? Eventually Eric was offered the position, a sales position with a major media company.

There are usually many components that make such happy endings possible. It’s easy to say that showing up at a job fair proved to be Eric’s lucky move. But, in truth, he had to outperform a lot of competitors, and his 29 interviews—many of which were generated by his direct-contact letter campaign—had turned him into a brilliant interviewer: he had three other offers! Would he have done as well if he hadn’t done his Seven Stories?

And would he have done as well if he had skipped the weekly group at the Club? Anita Attridge notes Eric’s com-

mitment to attending: “He was here every week—so he had his group cheering him on. And every week he was very clear about what he had done, and what he needed to do in the days to come. He was an inspiration to the group.”

Eric attended ten sessions at the Club’s Penn Station Branch before landing his new job.

“Don’t waste opportunities by sending out inferior résumés.”

The Benefit of Offering a Helping Hand

Gregor is another job hunter sent to the Club by his employer. He likewise landed a new job within ten sessions. He was especially tuned into the helping nature of the group. Anyone who has attended a meeting at The Five O’Clock Club knows that the atmosphere is pretty upbeat—and that people get into a helping frame of mind when they participate. Gregor’s success can probably be linked to his commitment to giving others a boost. “Try to help other people in your small group. It’s a nice thing to do, of course, but it makes you feel better about yourself. If you’re in a funk, the best way to get out of it is to give a hand to someone else. It’s a way of affirming that you’re a good person—and that makes you feel better!”

“On interview after interview I heard, ‘I’ve never seen a résumé like this before.’”

The payoff can sometimes be surprising. “I was thinking about ways to help a member of my group who is in human resources. I just sat down and

thought: ‘Who would I know in HR?’—and I recalled a friend from college who is director of HR for a major investment firm. For some reason I had never thought to call this guy, even though investment banking is my field. So by trying to assist someone else, I found a way to help myself.”

Gregor realized, however, just how complex networking can be. “You don’t just call up people and ask, ‘Do you know of anyone who’s hiring?’ You do call them, you email them, just to let them know how you’re doing. You can report on your ups and downs. You

usually get a reply and you can get a conversation going, and you never know when it can lead to the next level, to some helpful piece of information.”

And as well as knowing how to manage the message, Gregor had good ideas about who to contact: vendors, former

clients and old bosses. “Vendors sold to you in the past,” he points out, “and they’d like to see you employed again. They know a lot of other people in your field and can have helpful information. And when I was down, I called ex-clients. They were all happy to hear from me, and that gave me a boost—it helped to hear validation that I was good at my job. In one case, an ex-client ended up being one of my references. And I would never have thought of that. Good things can happen when you reach out to people.” The old bosses can be an invaluable source of information. “They can become coaches, in a sense, and you can ask for their opinions about the companies on your targeted list.”

But Gregor adds a word of caution about being fully prepared when you reach out to tell the world about yourself. “Don’t waste opportunities by sending out inferior résumés. Go by The Five O’Clock Club book and talk



Anita Attridge,
Five O’Clock Club Coach

to your coach. A résumé done the Club's way works. Everybody I showed my résumé to loved it. So jump on that format and stick with it. The same goes for cover letters. I could never have come up with such an effective cover letter on my own."

"I am conducting a job search—so I'm not unemployed."

At The Five O'Clock Club we stress that attitude is an important factor in job search: there are many dos and don'ts, there are techniques that can drive any search into high gear, but the lack of a positive attitude can sabotage everything. When Sabrina reported on her successful search, it was clear that she is a positive attitude poster child.

"I learned to chase companies instead of jobs. I sent out 125 letters, got 29 interviews and four offers."

"Even when you're leaving a job," she advises, "keep things upbeat. You may be glad that it's your last day and that you don't have to go back, but make sure that you say good-bye to every person you worked with, even if you have to call them later. I almost bypassed the office of one co-worker when I was on my way out. I was thinking, 'Does he really care stay if I stay or go?' But we had a nice chat, and he was the one who called me many weeks later to tell me about a call from a head hunter. And guess what: that turned out to be my new job!"

But it could easily have been an opportunity clipped in the earliest stages, had it not been for Sabrina's positive attitude. The head hunter described the job, and it really didn't sound like a match. Furthermore—and this was the big surprise—the boss would be a person that Sabrina had worked for a decade earlier. "I had my doubts

about that. I thought, 'I'm not sure I'd like to work for him again, and he might feel the same way about me.' But it is so important to keep an open mind." In Sabrina's case, all the pieces fit together despite her initial skepticism. The Five O'Clock Club reminds job hunters to go on any and all interviews: you'll get practice presenting yourself, and you'll get more offers, which give you more leverage in the market.

While she was pleased that the long-shot with a head hunter worked out for the best, Sabrina warns that relying on someone else to find you a job is not a sound approach. "I remember," she reports, "that my coach, Jim Borland, kept saying over and over 'head hunters don't work for you.' It took a while for that to gel with me, but then it sank in. And when I hear friends say, 'Oh, I've got a few head hunters working on my job search,' I tell them, 'Well, not really—the head hunters aren't working for you!' I came to the conclusion that I am my own best recruiter: a potential employer would prefer to hear from me directly."

Sabrina recommends as well that you position yourself as positively as possible. She heard a friend telling people that I'm unemployed, I'm looking

for a job. "But that's not positive enough. It's far better to say, 'I am conducting a job search. I am not unemployed: I am fully employed. I've giving everything I've got to this job search.'"

Sabrina attended seven sessions of the Club at the Grand Central branch before landing her new job as Director of Institutional Marketing at a bank.

"I am not unemployed. I am conducting a job search. I am fully employed. I'm giving it all that I have."

An Internet Posting Leads to a New Job: After a Lot of Hard Work

After 26 years of successful career in the financial markets, Jackie left her employer of more than a dozen years on good terms, as part of a restructuring. She was provided with Five O'Clock Club outplacement. She admits that job search was a skill that she had never had to develop. "I was invited to work at both the firms where I had built my career, and I had never been unemployed, so it was all new to me." And she actually toyed with the idea of a very early retirement. "My first thought was to leave New York, head to the beach house and lively happily ever after. My second thought was to really think about whether that would be such a wise move, and my third thought was to go for another job in the financial markets."

Without the financial pressure that most job hunters face, Jackie paced herself getting ready to market herself for the first time. "I took a few months to get my targets firmly settled, then began networking." And of course, she tapped the Internet resources that made sense. "I saw an appropriate job posted on CareerBuilders and sent my résumé into the black hole." She had been warned not to



"I looked over your resume and the good news is I like the paper it was typed on. Do you really want to know the bad news?"

expect much; she needed to be proactive: "I knew from the methodology that I had to identify a hiring manager at the company. I mentioned the name of the company in my small group, and someone said, 'I have a friend who works there.'"

Jackie was able to get a networking interview with the friend, who gave her information about the company culture and structure—and volunteered to do some snooping. She came back with the news that the CareerBuilders job had disappeared, but she had discovered who the hiring manager was. Jackie submitted her résumé directly and soon got a call from an HR person: there might be three jobs—would she come in for an interview? The 1:00 interview lasted until 5:30, and at 9:00 that evening she got a call to come back the next day, for another half-day of meetings. "I ended up having eight influencing letters to write, and then I had phone interviews with executives in other cities. It was a very daunting

process. But in fact I was able to call some of the people I'd met with for advice on the getting ready for the phone meetings."

**"For this one job,
I ended up having to write
eight influencing letters.
I got the job."**

Eventually a new position was created for Jackie. In her new role she manages a sales force of 30 people in a business-to-business unit for a global brand name company. She was able to take full advantage of her outplacement program that lasted for a full year. She attended 28 sessions of her small group. Her coach, Jim Borland, commented: "When she got in gear, she followed the methodology diligently and, as you can see, and it worked." ●



"When I said I was providing you with company transportation, I didn't mean a car."

The Job-Search Buddy System

Do you wish you had someone to talk to—fairly often and informally—about the little things?



"Here's what I'm planning to do today in my search? What are *you* planning to do? Let's talk tomorrow to make sure we've done it." You and your job-search buddy could keep each other positive and on track, and encourage each other to do what you told the small group you were going to do: Make that call, send out those letters, write that follow-up proposal, focus on the most important things that should be done—rather than (for example) spending endless hours responding to job postings on the Web.

With your buddy, practice your Two-Minute Pitch, get ready for interviews, bounce ideas off each other. Some job-search buddies talk every day. Some talk a few times a week. Most of the conversation is by phone and e-mail.

Sometimes, people match themselves up as buddies. Just pick someone you get along with in your small group. Sometimes, your coach can match you up. However you do it, stay away from negative people who talk about how bad it is out there. They will drag you down.

The small group changes over time: people get jobs; new people come in. If you lose one buddy who got a job, get another buddy.

Your buddy does not have to be in your field or industry. In fact, being in the same field or industry could keep you focused on the industry rather than on the *process*. But you *do* have to get along! The relationship may last only a month or two, or go on for years. Some buddies become friends.

Of course, you should see your Five O'Clock Club career coach *privately* for résumé review, target development, salary negotiation, and job interview follow-up. It's usually best to get professional coaching advice for these areas. ●