

Unthinkably, Yet Un-mistakenly, Unemployed

New firm helps the formerly secure find jobs

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Chalk up the founding of one new business to the downturn. Last week the president and founder of Operations Inc., David Lewis, working with regional headhunters, developed a new business, Job Search Services, offering guidance to the firms and individuals involved in layoffs throughout Westchester, Fairfield and the Hudson Valley.

"There's a subsequent need for these folks to secure some level of professional guidance on how to effectively find a new job," said Lewis. "Outplacement has been out there forever. I have been informally helping people for 23 years now."

According to Lewis, true outplacement services have in the past generally only been made available to the top 5 percent of executives in larger firms. He said that he is reluctant to benefit from troubled times, but hopes the service can ease the pain that more and more are feeling. According to the Bankers Ball Web site, 34,463 Wall Street jobs have disappeared this year and another 20,000 job losses are possible.

"I take heart in the fact that we're sharing some really valuable information with people that need it," said Lewis. "It's not very common for middle management staff and smaller businesses."

According to Lewis, mid-level staffers are in need of support right now. Job Search Services, which Lewis developed over the last month and originally described as a boot camp for those entering the job market, has the goal of educating the recently laid-off worker on how to maximize search efforts in a cost-effective manner.

The service offers those in a loose 50 mile radius of Stamford three hours of training and another 90 minutes for one-on-one counseling.

"The tools, info and training are universal," said Lewis. "This is not how to find a job in Fairfield County this is how to find a job, period." The training sessions, which can be accessed live or by the Web, cover topics like resume and cover letters; how to source opportunities; checking postings vs. posting a resume; using the sites to alert you to new opportunities; and other job search know-how.

Two one-on-one follow-up sessions are held with a career counselor to reinforce and review the training. "We're aggressively pricing this in the \$400 range, which by comparison is cheap to the firms that currently play in this space," said Lewis. "I think we'll get a significant amount of people who are out there and not getting a penny from their companies. The value is clearly there." The offering was developed by Lewis who noted

the developing market while his human relations consultancy was helping companies reduce numbers and learn how to lay people off.

Also helping in his teaching service are Chris Russell, founder of AllCountyJobs and Maureen Mackey, principal and co-founder of Mackey & Guasco Staffing Associates L.L.C., both of whom say the hiring market has been eerily quiet for the past few months. "The numbers of postings have gone down 25 percent, and this is only in the last four to five weeks," said Russell.

According to Mackey, prior to the deep drop in the market, corporations would offer severance, tips and possibly outplacement when downsizing. Now, many large shops don't have the budgets to cover outplacement spending. "If you haven't searched in five, 10 or 15 years, you're really at a disadvantage right now," said Russell. "All these technologies are going to be part of your job search. You have to have a presence on these sites to get ahead."

Mackey said the service offers troubleshooting to all aspects of the world of job markets, from etiquette and Web posting to follow-up strategies and attire standards in diverse industries. "Talk about the emotion of downsizing and everything that's happening in the world ... people are really feeling down on their luck," said Mackey. "We want to truly help people and let people invest in themselves. I want to give of my 22 years of being a recruiter. I can tell you what we, as the recruiters, are all really looking for so that it saves you time as a job seeker and emotions, too. You don't want to waste your time."

Mackey and Lewis pointed out that many of the layoffs that are happening are not based on performance, putting men and women who've had job security for more than 10 years back on the job market, which is a very different market for some.

"It doesn't have to be as hard as people make it," said Mackey. "We're about optimizing your ability to get back in the job market."

Mackey specifically will be teaching one of a set of classroom settings, hers focusing specifically on interviewing etiquette, attire, follow-up skills, and techniques for working with an agency to optimize visibility. "We're not life coaches; we're coaches in how to find your job," said Mackey. "We're evolving this to go with the demands of what's happening in the market place. We all need to get our houses heated and get our houses paid for."