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- **Students Wanted - Working with Staffing Agencies**
By Steve Jones

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Working with Staffing Agencies

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Great jobs can happen through the fate of any combination of choices. But beyond hard work and luck there are basically five consistently effective ways of uncovering job opportunities. They include direct referrals, Internet job boards, corporate web sites, newspaper advertising and employment agencies, also known as "Staffing Services."

Don't ever underestimate the power of a personal referral. Regardless of how far technology takes us, "who you know" will always rule. Failing friendship or nepotism, employment agencies are becoming the next best thing.

There exist more than 1500 employment agencies in Ontario and 4000 across Canada. Over a quarter of a million Canadians found work through Staffing Services last year. Yet in spite of this

popularity, employment agencies remain widely misunderstood and under-utilized by students and graduates. Getting informed about how the industry works will help you get the most out of your job hunt.

Staffing Services do not charge fees to applicants. The Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services (ACSESS) makes this a forbidden practice in its Code of Ethics and should never be a concern to you as a job seeker when dealing with one of ACSESS' member companies.

Temporary contracts lead to full-time or permanent work. Approximately 40 per cent of all temporary workers find regular employment directly resulting from temp assignments. Graduates and summer students are often the benefactors of the try before you buy approach by employers. Industries, companies and work environments can be as different as snowflakes. Temporary contracts give both parties the opportunity to assess fit and future before tying the knot of permanent employment.

Staffing companies specialize. Research will help you determine if the opportunities available through a Staffing Service best fit with what you have to offer. Some employment agencies specialize in light industrial temporary help while others are targeted to the opposite end of the spectrum in executive search. Some focus on specific industries such as pharmaceutical or retail, while others are experts at job disciplines like accounting, programming or sales. Selecting the right staffing company can generate more options and choices.

Student placement counselors and job-club facilitators always mention networking. This is just the tip of the Relationship Iceberg. Relationships that are nurtured and developed through bonds of trust and confidence will produce the most gratifying rewards throughout your career. Find a personnel consultant that sincerely cares about you - they are everywhere - and develop a lasting relationship.

Get Registered. There are no rules about the number of Staffing Services that you can register with. Obviously the issues of specialization and relationship will help you narrow the field but one staffing company is not enough! Register with two or three that tend to service slightly different target markets.

Regular follow-up and persistence will also help to keep you in your "top of mind." Although most Staffing Services have invested heavily in automated applicant and skill-tracking and retrieval systems that allow recruiters to recall your application when a job matches your skills, familiarity will put you at the top of the list. Know the

difference between being a pest and being helpful, but don't be lulled by a well-intended promise of "we'll call you."

Differentiate yourself further by renaming your resume file to your_name.doc when applying online. Internet recruiting, e-mail, job boards and word processing have resulted in millions of files named resume.doc to be fired around the world. Even go one more step by putting your name in the subject field of your e-mail, especially if your e-mail address is fancyname@hotmail.com.

The Canadian staffing services industry is comprised of temporary service providers, employment agencies, contract employment firms and search firms. There is something for everyone. If you believe in the old saying: "It's not what you know, but who you know," then get to know an experienced staffing professional. Visit www.acsess.org to get a list of staffing companies.

Steve Jones CPC is National President of the Association of Canadian Search, Employment & Staffing Services (ACSESS) and President of The People Bank. He can be reached at sjones@thepeoplebank.com.

ACSESS Code of Ethics & Standards

Ethical and good business practices are a basic requirement for membership in the Association of Canadian Search, Employment & Staffing Service and adherence is directly related to the success of the staffing services industry in Canada.

Clients, candidates and employees will be served faithfully, with integrity and professional responsibility.

The highest principles of honesty and fair practice will be observed in dealing with clients, candidates, employees and all regulatory authorities; the confidentiality of records will be respected in accordance with law and good business practices.

Leadership will provide in adherence to both the spirit and the letter of all applicable human rights, employment laws and regulations. All candidates and employees will be treated without prejudice and will not accept an order from any client that is discriminatory in any way.

All reasonable steps will be taken to provide clients with accurate information of each candidate's employment qualifications and experience; and only

those candidates who have given us authorization to represent their application for employment will be presented.

Candidates and employees will be supplied with complete and accurate information as provided by the client, regarding terms of employment, job descriptions and workplace conditions.

No candidate who has been previously placed will be recruited, encouraged or enticed to leave a client, nor be encouraged or coerced to leave any assignment before completion.

The right of a candidate or employee to accept the employment of their choice will not be restricted.

Membership privileges will not be misused for the purpose of recruiting a member's staff, or in any way that may otherwise injure our candidates, employees or competitors.

Income will be derived only from clients and no direct or indirect charges will be made to candidates or employees unless specified by a license.

The highest standards of integrity will be maintained in all forms of advertising, communications and solicitations; and business will be conducted in a manner designed to enhance the operation, image and reputation of the employment, recruitment and staffing services industry.

The rights and privileges of competitors will be recognized and respected in the true fashion of individual initiative and free enterprise; acts of unfair competition will not be done.

Clients, candidates and employees will be made aware of our duty to abide by this Code of Ethics; and will undertake to bring any potential infringements before the appropriate Association body. jp