

Finding Work in Recession

Written by Sandra D'AMICO

Finding a Job during an Economic Downturn"



Until recently, Cambodia's booming economy was creating strong demand for young Cambodian professionals with good skills. Some university graduates were lucky enough to find their first job relatively quickly. However, as Cambodia begins to feel the effects of the global financial crisis, there are early signs that employers are becoming more cautious in their hiring. Those looking for work in 2009 and 2010 will have to work even harder - and smarter - to get a job.

Just because things are getting tougher doesn't mean that job seekers should give up looking for work. Even in a tough market, there are positive steps you can take to increase your chances of finding the right job.

You can start by targeting the industries and companies that have the best employment prospects in 2009. Even in an economic downturn, some companies will continue to grow. Every day, look for stories in the *newspapers* about companies that are expanding their operations. For example, you might see a story about a bank opening new branches (e.g. Vattanac Bank recently opened a new branch) or a telecom company expanding its network. When you see these positive company stories, visit the company's website and get the contact details for its HR Department.

Also keep in mind that the jobs market doesn't start and finish with the private sector. Even when private companies stop hiring, organisations in the not-for-profit sector will continue to recruit. This includes international donor organisations (such as the World Bank),

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Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and foreign embassies. You might even consider working in a Government department or the Education sector, even if this isn't where you want to be in the long-run. With a shortage of teachers in the Education sector there are quite likely to be several opportunities at schools, universities and technical vocational training institutes! Be creative about how you search for opportunities!

Make use of all available resources to help you find a job. This includes careers counseling units at universities, job advertisements, recruitment agencies and the growing number of online jobs sites - such as Cambodia's leading online job portals *CareerLink* (www.careerlink.hrinc.com.kh) and Bongthom (www.bongthom.com). Other websites with jobs and training information include CAMFEBA's *Youth Employment and Social Dialogue Project* (www.yep.camfeba.com) and the *Khmer Youth Orientation Project* (www.kyop.org). Finally, don't be afraid to ask friends, neighbours or family members if there are any job vacancies at their place of work. Sometimes you might get lucky.

There is no magic formula to finding a job during a recession. Keep following the same steps that helped people find jobs during the good times. Here are some simple but effective tips for job-seekers:

- Apply for as many jobs as you can (provided you meet the basic job requirements).
- For each application, tailor your cover letter and resume to the position you are applying for. Don't be lazy - take the time to prepare good applications.
- Double-check your application to make sure there are no spelling errors and ensure you only send the information the employer wants! Ensure your total application by email is less than 500kb!
- Prepare well for every interview - research the company and think in advance about how to "sell yourself" in the best possible way.
- Never be late for an interview and always dress professionally.

The CareerLink Webportal has an online career forum where youth are discussing the challenges they face. If you have a question, log on today and get the advice you need to be successful.

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If you are finding it difficult to find your first job, use your time to make yourself more attractive to employers. As all job seekers know, the two things that employers value most are *skills* and *experience*

To develop your skills, consider some extra vocational training in English, computers or job-specific skills. Not only will this improve your skills, but it will also demonstrate to potential employers that you are serious about finding a job.

In terms of experience, try to get an internship while you are still at university - even if it is unpaid or not part of your long-term career goal. Any sort of job - even unskilled part-time work - will give you an edge over applicants who have never worked before.

Internships and part-time jobs are not the only ways to gain experience. *Volunteering* with NGOs and other not-for-profit organisations is a great way to develop your practical skills, improve your self-confidence and give you something to talk about in job interviews - not to mention giving something back to your community. This type of work is often easier to find than formal internships and employers will value it just as highly. The following organisations can help you find volunteer placements:

- Youth Star Cambodia, www.youthstarcambodia.org
- Khmer Youth Association, www.kya-cambodia.org
- Khmer Youth and Social Development Organization, www.kysd.org .
- Youth Resource Development Programme, www.yrdp.org

Finding your first job can be difficult and daunting - especially in today's economic environment. Remain positive, optimistic, passionate and never give up on yourself. Keep believing in yourself and eventually your persistence will pay off.

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A job isn't just a job, it consumes more than a third of your day - make sure you enjoy what you do and challenge yourself to be creative and do things differently! Contact hrinc@hrinc.com.kh for more information