

# Countering Job Market Gloom: Ten Positive Ideas

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"What's it going to take  
for me to be successful  
in my career field?"



We hear daily that unemployment figures are up across the country and that includes Milwaukee and Wisconsin. You can't open the newspaper without seeing headlines on job loss, unemployment and prominent companies laying off employees.

Much of the information is true and we are certainly going through challenging times—but all this negativism can also be misleading and sometimes, unnecessarily discouraging. For example, a headline the other day cited the rescinding of job offers as a huge problem—the article went on to cite only one company by name guilty of taking back employment offers.

Media often has a mixed record in bringing multiple perspectives to complex issues—like employment.

As college students today, it's natural to let these reports influence your attitude and enthusiasm for graduation and the job market. Some students are considering graduate school as an alternative to job hunting—even when it doesn't really fit into their career plans. Not usually a good idea.

There's no doubt that UWM seniors need to gear up for this challenging market. When times were tough, people have always had to summon new strength and strategies to be successful. Working smarter and harder is necessary. Nothing new about that.

Peter Drucker, Management Consultant, preaches that often, the one factor that makes a difference in success or failure is ---simply hard work.

OK—so it's clear that you've got a lot of work ahead of you in facing this job market. Your resume needs to be better than ever; elevator speech clear

and persuasive; networking strategies planned and thoughtful; on-line applications matching the stated requirements; interviewing skills sharp and follow-up persistent and professional. But you can do it.

Let's also bring some objectivity and balance to the picture—and in so doing, hopefully provide momentum for your job seeking. I'd like to present 10 ideas on job hunting and the job market that are positive and encouraging.





## 1. Job Market Statistics

Don't let all that gloom and doom of job market data get you down—most if it doesn't apply to you. Understanding the job market is like shutting your eyes and describing an elephant—it depends on whether you're at the tail, trunk or legs. With the job market, it depends on what data you're looking at—local, state or national as well as industry specific unemployment statistics; job loss, job gain, job creation—you get the idea. Also—there's always good news with the bad. Although several companies and industries may be losing ground, there are always those that are flourishing and looking for talent. Additionally, an employer may be laying off staff in some areas and hiring in others—or not hiring at a targeted level, but continuing to recruit college graduates for entry-level opportunities.

Milwaukee and Wisconsin's unemployment rate is 5.8% and some experts are saying that it's likely to go higher—it's still less than the national figure of 7.8%. By way of perspective, Chicago and Minneapolis/St Paul are over 7%. Additionally the unemployment rate for college graduates is 3.7%—considerably less than the general rate. College graduates are doing much better than the general population.

## 2. Your Personal Job Market

It's important to know that all the statistics and projections on the economy and job market represent the view from 20,000 feet—it's the big picture. To be successful, each graduate needs to develop their own individualized or "ground level view" of the job market.

Each "ground level view" is unique, personal and customized to your situation, your skills, background, experience, major and goals. Key elements include organizations, openings, opportunities and people in your network which and who match your career goals. Getting comfortable and competent identifying your personal job market is the foundation for a successful job search. This requires some time and commitment—and often the help of a Career Coach or Counselor.

## 3. Some Employers are Doing Well

Even though many companies are cutting jobs, many are holding steady and even adding college

graduates to their organization. Manpower's December 2008 report stated that 67% of US employers plan to hold staff levels steady for the first quarter of 2009. This can be attributed to uncertainty in the economic environment. In this recent study of 31,800 employers, 16% planned to increase staff and 13% to reduce their payrolls. "The large number of employers that plan to sit on the sidelines in terms of hiring suggests that while they may not be adding a lot of workers, they recognize that having available talent is critical to business success," said Jonas Prising, President of Manpower North America. "Employers who are smart are preparing now to be ready when the economy recovers." Employers in the Midwest and South anticipate the strongest hiring outlook.

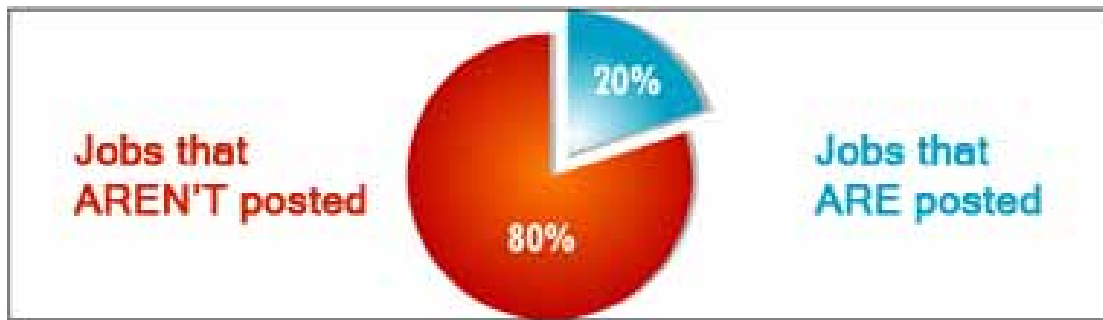
## 4. UWM's Situation

Here at UWM, employer participation in the Fall 2008 All Majors Career Day matched 2007 totals. As usual, there was a waiting list of employers for the 92 slots. This event is always an indicator of Milwaukee Metro area employment prospects—and specifically, employer interest in recruiting UWM students and alumni. A survey of the employers at the 2008 event showed that 40% of employers were planning to increase hiring. 22% of employers noted their hiring needs would remain the same. They also rated the following qualities as essential when hiring new graduates: sound work ethic, communication skills, willingness to learn, positive attitude/enthusiasm, and an understanding of their industry challenges.

Additionally, employer participation in two major Spring 2009 events—The Diversity Job Fair (March 5) [www.msc.uwm.edu/events\\_activitieslist\\_2009.cfm](http://www.msc.uwm.edu/events_activitieslist_2009.cfm) and Net-WORKING Night for the College of Letters & Science (February 18) [www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/networking\\_event\\_2009.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/networking_event_2009.htm) is consistent with 2008 Employer participation. Check out the employers who are participating on the CDC website. It's an impressive list.

PantherJobs—the web-based technology that connects UWM students and alumni with employers presently has 350 jobs posted including top employers like Kohl's, Johnson Controls, Rockwell, Brady, State of Wisconsin, Bank Mutual, Roundy's, WE Energies, Medical College of Wisconsin, Direct Supply, M&I Bank among others including many non-profits like Children's Service Society, Literacy Services, Meta House, and Goodwill Industries and smaller, medium size and emerging companies as well. If an employer is on PantherJobs,





it means they are specifically interested in UWM students and alumni. [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/panther\\_jobs.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/panther_jobs.html)

Also, there's an employer database of over 3,000 employers who have recruiting partnerships with UWM located in PantherJobs. This is great resource for proactively identifying organizations who may want to hire you—or for making contacts.

### 5. UWM's Class of 2008 Employment Status

The Class of 2008 is presently engaged with this challenging economy and is on track to be as successful as the class of 2006. Preliminary data from the Employment Survey of the Class of 2008 includes the following:

- 83% are employed or in graduate school--that's at the 6 months point after graduation—92% of the class of 2006 were employed or in graduate school 9 months after graduation.
- Just as importantly, for the class of 2008, 70% report they are in positions related to their education
- 78% are satisfied, very satisfied or extremely satisfied with their jobs

### 6. Help from the Federal Government

President Obama's 800-900 billion, 4 million jobs Economic Stimulus Package which is moving its way through Congress will have a positive effect on Wisconsin and Milwaukee. Millions are slotted for Wisconsin, adding jobs in energy, environment, community service, childcare, law enforcement, education, transportation and construction. Your task as a job hunter—stay aware of this legislation and begin to research how it will translate to jobs and employers in your field. It will.

<http://www.brookings.edu/topics/u-s-economy.aspx>  
[http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/?sc=gaw&gclid=NS0sPOAzpgCFQEOggodNU\\_Z1g](http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/?sc=gaw&gclid=NS0sPOAzpgCFQEOggodNU_Z1g)  
<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/430562>

### 7. Networking and the Hidden Job Market

It's critical that you learn that many jobs are in the hidden job market—they aren't on the job boards, employer websites or in print. Depending on your field, this could include 50-80% of possible opportunities. Striking the right balance between networking and applying for the "real time" openings

which are on the web or in print, is an important part of your job seeking strategy. [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/jobsearch\\_advertised.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/jobsearch_advertised.html)

It's also important to know that networking is not schmoozing or interacting in social or career circles where you're not comfortable—but rather meeting with people who already know you—and believe in you--- and as your confidence develops, getting meetings with their referrals or others you don't know. It's not asking if they are aware of where jobs are but rather asking thoughtful, researched questions about their work, field, employer and industry. That's how you make a professional impression. That's how you impress people—and this positive impression can later translate to job prospects. Experts advise that the best way to get a job is not always as a job seeker but as an information seeker. It's in these informational encounters that your best self can come out. CDC has several programs and resources to help you in this process. [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/student\\_services.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/student_services.html)  
<https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/briants/Katie.mp3>  
[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/networking\\_event\\_2009.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/networking_event_2009.htm)

### 8. Your Career Development Center Partnership

Job seeking is certainly stressful. So don't go it alone. The Career Development Center has people, programs and resources to help you in your job search. We provide a full range of services to help you set goals, learn employer research techniques, develop networking skills, write a great resume and prepare for interviews. Stop by the CDC in 128 Mellencamp Hall and meet with a Peer Adviser (CRA—Career Resource Assistant) or Career Counselor on a walk-in basis in order to get started. And the CDC website is a virtual career center which has many resources, tools and downloads to help you. The CDC is everywhere at UWM—in the classroom and curricula, on the web and in 128 Mellencamp Hall. [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/student\\_services.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/student_services.html)

### 9. Better Days Ahead

Simple even trite sayings often become truthful. Tough times don't last—but tough people do. You're always going to face challenges in your career life—learning to face them now with creativity, innovation, resiliency and determination will provide invaluable lessons for your future transitions. A valuable editorial



in The Journal Sentinel recently pointed out, “If you think of the economy as a field of grain, this has been the season that the sun and rain failed us. But the grain still grew.....and even now, the scattered seed of good ideas is germinating.....we found kernels of optimism everywhere we looked.” It’s helpful to point out the optimism in these challenging times.

- We are resilient—the last time we had difficult times like these, 1982-83, this country was on the cusp of building the “New Economy.” Many of the 30 largest companies in America today didn’t exist then—companies like Google, Verizon, Microsoft, Home Depot and Apple.
- UW Madison and UW Milwaukee are working hard on incredible research which has and will continue to attract new, top companies to Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Metro area.
- Wisconsin is attracting investors for many start-ups and existing companies are showing evidence of increased efficiencies and innovation which will translate to job opportunities. Just one example is Johnson Controls now manufacturing the batteries for Ford’s plug-in hybrids.
- The Milwaukee Metro Region is well grounded in 1,000s of manufacturing jobs. Yes, thousands of jobs have been lost, but lessons have been learned, global markets found and manufacturing in SE Wisconsin will always be a center of excellence in this economy.
- There continue to be many examples of Milwaukee and Wisconsin companies growing in industries like energy, the environment, eldercare, construction, water and technology to name six prominent areas. There are others.
- Milwaukee has made progress on social ills like crime, teen birth rates and infant mortalities. There are jobs presently and more to come in these areas.
- Healthcare is expanding—and will need trained professionals in a wide variety of areas.

## 10. Have Faith!

Richard Bolles, author of the best selling book on job hunting book, *What Color is Your Parachute*, <http://www.jobhuntersbible.com/> says—“When you’re at a crossroads and if you happen have an old faith hanging in your closet, it’s probably a good time to bring it put an dust it off.”

Faith can embrace the spiritual---the divine—if

meaningful and personal for you, by all means use faith as a resource. It can also mean faith in your family, in your friends, colleagues and network; faith in your professors, in your university-UW Milwaukee---and maybe most importantly, faith in yourself. Every generation has had to work hard to research and secure meaningful jobs—it’s no different today.

Mary Isbister, President of General Metal Works in Mequon, says, “I’m one of those eternal optimists. This challenging economy is giving all of us time to step back and say, ‘OK, those other opportunities that we’ve thought about--what is it going to take?’”

This is a question we all need to pose. “What’s it going to take for me to be successful in my career field?”

Let’s get to work on the answers—UWM and the Career Development Center are here to give you all the support, encouragement and guidance you need.

