

A Second Look at Situation-Wanted Advertisements

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This study investigated the effectiveness of situation-wanted advertisements as a means of obtaining employment. One hundred forty-five job applicants who had placed a situation-wanted ad were contacted to determine the number of inquiries and job offers that resulted from their advertisements. The results of the survey indicated that situation-wanted advertisements are effective in obtaining employment inquiries and job offers as 70.2% of the applicants running the ads were contacted by a potential employer and 28.7% received job offers.

A recent study by Willis, Miller, and Huff (1991) investigated for the first time the effectiveness of situation-wanted advertisements as a means of finding employment. The results of this study indicated that situation-wanted advertisements may be an effective component in the job search process as 68% of the people running these ads were contacted and 13% received a job offer as a direct result of running the ad.

Because of these promising results, it is the purpose of the present study to replicate and extend the Willis *et al.* study by determining not only how many inquiries are received by people placing situation-wanted ads, but also who those inquiries are from.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects consisted of 185 people who placed situation-wanted advertisements in newspapers or professional publications.

Procedure

Situation-wanted advertisements were selected from *The Wall Street Journal*, the American Psychological Association *Monitor*, *Roanoke Times and World News*, *Boston Globe*, *Denver Post*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, and the *Dallas Morning News*. Advertisements were selected from issues which has been published between one and six months prior to the study. These applicants were either sent a questionnaire or surveyed by telephone.

Questionnaire - A letter was sent to 39 of the job seekers explaining the purpose of the study. This letter included a self-addressed, stamped envelope along with the survey. The survey consisted of four questions:

- 1) Had the job seeker been contacted as a result of the ad,
- 2) how many times had he/she been contacted,
- 3) by whom were they contacted (organizations, resume firms, etc.), and
- 4) the number of job offers they received as a result of the advertisement.

Twelve of the 39 job seekers (31%) responded to the questionnaire.

Telephone Survey - One hundred twenty-six job seekers were contacted by phone and 69 (48%) agreed to answer the same four questions as were contained in the mail survey.

RESULTS

The majority of the respondents reported receiving some type of inquiry from their advertisement, with a small percentage of the inquiries leading to a job offer. As shown in Table 1, 72.5% of the respondents received some form of inquiry.

As shown in Table 2, 28.7% of the respondents obtained job offers as a result of their situation-wanted ad. This is about twice the percentage as reported in the Willis *et al.* (1991) study.

As shown in Table 3, the majority of the responses to the advertisements were by organizations with job openings and the other responses were by employment agencies and resume firms. Many contacts were by other job seekers who misunderstood the ad and thought that the person placing ad was looking for an employee rather than looking for a job.

Two job seekers were contacted by people with "get rich" schemes and two were contacted by a writer doing research on job hunting.

Table 1

Number of Inquiries

Number of Inquiries	Frequency	Percent
0	22	27.5
1	9	11.5
2	17	21.2
3	10	12.5
4	4	5.0
5	8	10.0
6	4	5.0
7	3	3.8
10	2	2.5
20	1	1.3
	80	

DISCUSSION

Job search experts who oppose situation-wanted advertisements question the effectiveness of placing such ads because there is little research concerning the advantages and disadvantages of placing situation-wanted ads. Contrary to "expert" opinion, this study combined with the study by Willis, Miller, and Huff (1991) indicate that placing situation-wanted ads could be useful in obtaining employment opportunities.

Although only 28.7% of the advertisements led to actual employment offers, this figure indicates an increase in response rate as compared to the previous study conducted by Willis, Miller, and Huff (1986). There

was also an increase in the average number of employment offers. Willis, Miller, and Huff (1986) found that the majority of employment seekers who were offered a job received one employment offer whereas the present study found that of employment seekers receiving offers, most received two offers.

This study also showed that over 70% of the inquiries were made by organizations with potential employment opportunities. This may suggest that situation-wanted advertisements actually reach potential employers.

Table 2

Number of Job Offers

Number of Job Offers	Frequency	Percent
0	57	71.3
1	5	6.3
2	11	13.9
3	1	1.2
4	2	2.5
5	1	1.2
6	1	1.2
7	1	1.2
20	1	1.2
	80	

Table 3

Types of Firms Contacting Job Seekers

Type of Contact	Frequency	Percent
Potential Employer	146	70.2
Employment Agency	31	14.9
Resume Firm	5	2.4
People who misunderstood the advertisement	22	10.5
"Get Rich" Schemes	2	1.0
Writer	2	1.0
	208	

REFERENCES

Willis, S. C., Miller, T. A., & Huff, G. (1991). Situation-wanted advertisements: A means for obtaining job inquiries and offers. *Applied H.R.M. Research*, 2, 18-23.