

**Dear Lalli**  
**By**  
**Wendy Lalli**

*Dear Lalli,*

*I'm graduating from college at the end of the fall term with a major in Marketing and want a job that will make my education pay off. I'm looking for an entry-level position with an ad agency downtown. Despite a high GPA, I'm having very little luck getting interviews. And one I did finally get was disappointing. I put together a presentation of my class work that seemed to impress everyone. Yet when the conversation came around to money, the salary mentioned was \$5,000 less than that listed on salary.com. as the industry average! My mother says I should take what I can get. My question is – should I take the first job offered or wait for one that pays what I want?*

*Ted from Tinley*

Dear Ted,

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! This is a wonderful time of life and you are entering a wonderful profession. I only wish that the economy was “wonderful,” but two out of three ain't bad. Seriously though, while you shouldn't necessarily take the first job that's offered, I do think a little reality check is in order.

First, while salary charts are good for getting a general idea of compensation offered for different positions, they are not hard and fast guidelines on what a job pays. Salaries, like just about everything else in this world, are effected by supply and demand. If there are a lot marketing majors in your area and few jobs, the salaries being offered will reflect this. Second, when you're starting out, salary should be at the bottom of your list on why you want to take or refuse a position. What you *should* be concerned about is who will you be working with, will your manager have the time and interest in enhancing your academic knowledge with on-the-job mentoring and will you be working on projects that will lead to a better job in the future? The truth is, the first year a graduate enters the workforce he or she can often seem as much of a financial liability to an employer as an asset. After all, your expertise on the job is limited because you lack practical experience. And remember, the more an employer pays you, the more they are going to expect of you. If you can't deliver, it may not be worth their while to keep you.

So think of this year as sort of a post graduate course to your academic studies and consider it as an investment in your overall career. The money will come soon enough once your skill sets – and your experience – warrant it.

One more thing, the most important contribution you can make to any employer is your eagerness to work. Enthusiasm, energy and a willingness to do more than you're asked for will quickly mark you as someone who's worth grooming for bigger and better things.

Good luck, best wishes and regards to your mom.

*Dear Lalli,*

*I lost my job as a secretary three months ago after ten years with the same company following a merger. My boss was also let go. I've been trying to get work in every way I can, answering want ads in the paper and online and registering with recruiters. I even sent a hundred letters out to different companies. Nothing seems to work. I keep hearing that I have to network but I have no idea how to do that. Can you help me?*

*Danielle from Downers Grove*

Dear Danielle,

I am so sorry to hear about your job loss. I know it can be a blow to lose a job after 10 weeks let alone after 10 years. As you've observed, networking is an essential job search tool. It's not really as complicated as it may seem. Keep in mind that everyone you know, including relatives, old friends, your ex-boss and anyone else you meet through these contacts, are part of your network. And the more people you contact the more likely you are to finally reach someone who can use your services.

The key to networking is this – turn business contacts into friends who are willing to help you in your job search. You do this by treating everyone you meet – including total strangers – with the highest level of consideration and kindness. Show you appreciate their taking the time to talk to

you on the phone or to read your resume. Ask if you can do anything for them and then do it if at all possible. Here's how to start.

Call at least ten friends and tell them you're expanding your job search network. **DO NOT ASK THEM IF THEY KNOW WHERE YOU CAN GET A JOB!** Instead, ask if they know of anyone you should contact about work including recruiters, human resource people and professionals who use administrative help. Tell them the industries you've worked in or an industry you'd **LIKE** to work in. Also let them know what you're especially good at ("I type 80 words a minute and take dictation by Dictaphone and in person.") Then offer to send them a resume to give them a better idea of what you do. Finally, ask if you can use their name when you contact the people they suggest.

If talking to strangers makes you nervous, start slow. Before calling, send your resume and a short note to all of the people your friends have suggested you get in touch with. In the note mention how you got their name and why you're writing. Something like this, "Our mutual friend, Joanne Jones, suggested that I contact you since I'm seeking employment in your industry. Knowing that I have ten years experience as an executive secretary in this field, Joanne thought you might know who I should contact about possible job opportunities." Tell them you're enclosing your resume for their further information and that you'll be calling them later in the week. Include your phone number in case they want to call you first. When you call, keep the conversation cordial and brief. Ask if it's a convenient time to talk. If the answer is no, or if there is any hesitation, offer to call back at a better time. The trick is to be as pleasant, friendly and considerate as possible. Again, do not ask for a job. Just ask for suggestions on whom to contact about work. The rule of thumb is you have to connect with a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend before you'll uncover a potential job. It's kind of like a treasure hunt where one clue leads to another. Just keep going until someone says, "I'm looking for a new secretary. Why don't you come in and see me."

You mentioned that you have registered with recruiters. I suggest you contact and interview with as many recruiters as possible - at least six or seven to start with. Make a record of who interviewed you at which agency and when. Send thank you notes after every interview. (Remember, recruiters are an part of your network and the power of networking begins by turning business contacts into personal advocates.) Follow up your thank you note with E-mails and voice mails every other week. Don't hound them. But remind them of who you are, what you do and

when you met. Let them know that you're available to work immediately. Just think - if they're looking for a secretary to send to a client when you call – you can save them a lot of work! Even if they don't have anything for you right then, they'll still appreciate your pro-active approach.

Hope this has been helpful. I'm sure you'll find something soon. Good luck!

Wendy

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