

Paying Someone to Find Your Job

For most of the past century, the process was simple: a company needed workers, so it paid a recruiter to find candidates. The recruiter received their fee after a new employee was hired. This system worked well for many years. Now, however, finding a job has become so difficult that the old system is changing.

More and more office workers, tech professionals, and other job seekers are now paying recruiters themselves. Instead of waiting for companies to find them, these job seekers are hiring what the industry calls reverse recruiters. These are professionals who help people find jobs, rather than helping companies find workers. Ten years ago, this idea would have seemed very unusual. Today, for many people who are struggling to find work, it feels like a smart solution.

The reasons for this change are easy to see. By late 2025, the number of unemployed Americans was higher than the number of available jobs for the first time since the pandemic, according to government data. The average job search was taking almost six months. At the same time, thousands of workers who lost their jobs at big companies like Amazon and UPS were entering an already crowded market. The traditional process of sending applications, waiting for weeks, hearing nothing, and trying again had become very tiring and discouraging for many people.

The current job market is also confusing because it appears to be healthy. Government data shows millions of job openings across the country, which suggests there are many opportunities. However, a closer look at the numbers paints a different picture. Since early 2024, the number of open positions has been more than two million higher per month than the number of people actually hired. Many of these job postings are what people in the industry call ghost jobs. These are listings that stay online for months but never result in a hire. Job seekers spend a lot of time preparing materials for positions that may not even be real.

AI tools have also made things more difficult in some ways. They have made it easier to send many applications quickly, but they have made it easier for everyone to do the same. This means a single job posting might receive hundreds of applications, and most of them are removed by a computer before a real person ever sees them. Getting noticed is now harder than ever.

Reverse recruiters try to solve this problem, though their services and prices are different. Some only charge a fee after the job seeker finds a job, taking a percentage of their first paycheck. A company called Refer, for example, charges about 20 percent of the new hire's first month of salary. Other services charge a monthly fee whether or not they find a job. One agency called Reverse Recruiting Agency charges \$1,500 per month, sends up to one hundred applications per week on the client's behalf, and takes an extra percentage of the first year's salary if the person gets hired. This service also includes resume writing, LinkedIn profile updates, and contacting employees at the companies where the client is applying.

The people who use these services often share the same story: they have been looking for work for a long time, they are exhausted, and they are ready to pay for help. Sean Cole lost his job at a well-known streaming company and searched for work for about a year before paying around \$400 to a freelance reverse recruiter he found online. The recruiter applied to fifty jobs on his behalf, but none of them led to an interview. Cole used the extra time to complete a project management certification, hoping that a new qualification would help him in future applications. He even began thinking about starting his own reverse recruiting service.

Not everyone thinks this model is a good idea. Some experienced recruiters have expressed concerns. One problem is that many job applications ask the applicant to confirm that they personally submitted the materials. When a third party does this instead, it raises ethical questions. There are also concerns about data privacy, since these services usually need access to the client's professional accounts and passwords, and there are few rules currently in place to regulate this industry.

There is also a bigger problem: these services are only available to people who can afford them. If reverse recruiting becomes more popular and more effective, it could give an advantage to candidates who already have money, making the job market even less fair for everyone else.

It is not yet clear whether reverse recruiting is a permanent change or just a response to a difficult period in the job market. What is clear is that finding a job has become so complicated that a whole new industry has developed to help people do it. Getting a job, it turns out, has become a job in itself.

- 1) Have you ever felt that finding a job was very stressful or exhausting?
- 2) In Korea, how do people usually find jobs? Do you think the system is fair?
- 3) Would you ever pay someone to help you find a job?
- 4) What kind of help do you think is most useful when looking for a job? (resume writing, interview practice, networking, etc.)
- 5) Do you think it is fair that some people can pay for extra help in the job market?
- 6) Do you think sending many applications is a good strategy, or is it better to focus on fewer, high-quality applications?
- 7) In your opinion, what is more important for getting a job: skills, experience, connections, or luck?
- 8) Do you think the job market today is harder than it was 10 or 20 years ago?
- 9) If you lost your job tomorrow, what would be your first three steps?

Century	(n)	a period of one hundred years	The city celebrated its history of over a century with a big parade.
Recruiter	(n)	a person whose job is to find new people to join a company or organization	The sports recruiter went to many schools to find the best young players.

Candidate	(n)	a person who is applying for a job or being considered for a position	There are three candidates running for class president this year.
Seeker	(n)	a person who is looking for or trying to find something	The truth seeker traveled around the world to find answers to his questions.
Industry	(n)	a particular field of business or economic activity	The tourism industry is very important for the economy of this island.
Struggle	(v)	to experience difficulty while trying to achieve something	He is struggling with his math homework because the lessons are very hard.
Crowded	(adj)	full of people or things, making movement or progress difficult	The bus was so crowded this morning that I had to stand the whole way.
Discouraging	(adj)	causing someone to lose confidence or enthusiasm	It was discouraging to see that the shop was closed after I walked so far.
Appear	(v)	to seem to be a certain way based on the available evidence	The store appears to be closed, even though the lights are still on.
Closer look	(n)	a more careful or detailed examination of something	If you take a closer look at this map, you will see a small path to the lake.
Paint a different picture	(idm)	to show a situation in a way that is different from how it first seemed	The house looks nice outside, but the broken windows inside paint a different picture.
Open	(adj)	available for someone to take or apply for	Is this seat open, or is someone sitting here?
Position	(n)	a specific job or role within an organization	The coach decided to change the players' positions before the second half.
Notice	(v)	to observe or pay attention to someone or something	I noticed that you got a new haircut today, and it looks great.
Percentage	(n)	a portion of a whole expressed in hundredths	A high percentage of students in our class speak more than two languages.
Up to	(prep)	as many as or even a certain amount	This small car can carry up to four people comfortably.
Resume	(n)	a short written document describing your education and work experience	You should bring a copy of your resume to the meeting tomorrow.
Behalf	(n)	as a representative of or for the benefit of someone	My sister could not come, so I accepted the award on her behalf.

Certification	(n)	an official document proving that you have completed a course or have specific skills	You need a special certification to teach scuba diving at this resort.
Qualification	(n)	a quality, skill, or experience that makes someone suited for a job	Being able to speak French is a great qualification for this travel job.
Express	(v)	to communicate a thought or feeling through words or actions	The students expressed their thanks to the teacher with a small gift.
Concern	(n)	a feeling of worry or nervousness about a situation	My parents have some concerns about me traveling alone for the first time.
Applicant	(n)	a person who formally requests something, such as a job	Each applicant must fill out a form before they can take the test.
Access	(n)	the right or opportunity to use or enter something	You need a key card to get access to the building after 6:00 p.m.
In place	(phr)	established and ready to be used	The new school rules are now in place to keep everyone safe.
Regulate	(v)	to control an activity or process by using rules or laws	The body uses sweat to help regulate its temperature when it is hot.
Clear	(adj)	easy to perceive, understand, or interpret	The sky was so clear that we could see all the stars at night.
Turn out	(phr v)	to happen in a particular way or to have a particular result	I thought it would rain today, but it turns out the weather is perfect.