

SHRM-Atlanta HR Helping HR Event Brings Leaders Together To Assist Job Seekers

Providing Practical Tools to Navigate the Recession and Land a Job

When the competition for jobs gets tough, the tough turn to SHRM-Atlanta. Recognizing an increasing number of members have found themselves in the job market in recent months, a group of SHRM-Atlanta leaders came together to lend a helping hand. The end result? A day full of speakers, workshops and interactive discussions offered exclusively to members and geared toward helping unemployed HR professionals land a job in today's challenging economy.

Within six weeks, the planning committee, led by **Tamara O'Neill**, President, Careers On Course, created this in-depth event for job seekers, entitled "*HR Helping HR.*" Nearly 200 SHRM-Atlanta members in attendance benefited from the event, which was held on May 29 at Cox Enterprises. From leveraging social networking sites in your job search to how to turn the interview into a job offer, participants took home a plethora of practical tools and information.

Keynote Notes - Establishing a network of contacts who will aggressively promote you in your job search

One of the many program highlights was a keynote address by HR leader Michael Esposito, Director of Associate Relations, Northern Division, The Home Depot. If you haven't met Michael Esposito or heard him speak, you should. He's a networking guru and one of Atlanta's best connectors. If you ask him, he will tell you that wasn't always the case. He only started networking and helping others in 2004 when he found himself unemployed. In five years, he has developed more connections than most people make in their lifetime. He approaches networking like a business. "I've learned more about people, their businesses, hope, fears, frustrations, mistakes, successes, and what I believe to be the real economy than I could have ever imagined via the media. And doing so has exploded my network of quality relationships, enriching my life and potentially my professional opportunities," Esposito told participants. "If I can do it, you can do it."

With his “tell it like it is” presentation style blended with a great sense of humor, Esposito (as his friends and colleagues like to call him) provided his unique insight into the job search. He challenged participants with a series of questions and asked that they be reflective about their leadership abilities and business acumen and look for ways to enhance their skill set while searching for a job.

Esposito also encouraged the audience to ask themselves what they have done to build productive and quality relationships, so people within their professional network and former organizations can enthusiastically recommend them. According to Esposito, another key step in building relationships and honing your skills is to get involved in a non-profit, dedicating some of your free time to give back to the community. “It’s a win-win-win-win, you give back to the community, hone your skills and increase your visibility and make some great new connections.” The volunteer experience empowers you with a great story to share with prospective employers when asked how you have been spending your time while unemployed. SHRM-Atlanta member and new Atlanta resident **Amita Rao** agrees. “While I have not been working, I took a step back from my volunteer work, somehow thinking I didn’t have anything to offer. Mike Esposito helped me realize I do. My skills don’t disappear when I am not working. I can put them to good use as I look for a job.”

Reinventing Yourself In the Face of Today’s Tough Economy

A portion of the day’s event was dedicated to providing participants with an update on the state of the job market. Speaking on behalf of Commissioner Michael Thurmond, Wayne Mack, Senior Employment and Training Consultant with the Field Services Division of the Georgia Department of Labor shared the latest statistics with the audience. While Georgia’s jobless rate is the highest since 1983, it’s important to put the statistics in perspective. Mack reminded the audience there are many different angles from which you can view a situation. “If you got five economists in the room, it would be difficult to get them to agree,” said Mack. “What’s important is that you not get discouraged by the numbers, but rather sharpen your focus on selling yourself and your unique skill set. Mack challenged each participant to see him or herself as one who can perform and bring the magic to a prospective employer. “It’s about increasing your exposure – that’s what gets people hired and promoted,” added Mack.

The hardest hit areas in the recession include manufacturing, trade, administrative services, temporary employment, and construction. So Mack reinforces the importance of reinventing yourself. Turn your attention to areas that have been less impacted such as technology, education and healthcare. What does the future look like for HR jobs? According to Mack, three HR jobs glow the brightest with the highest room for growth once the economy recovers. Those areas are employment and recruiting, compensation/analysis, and training and development.

Top Three HR Jobs – Will Grow Faster With Higher Salaries As Economy Improves

- Employment & Recruiting
- Compensation/Analysis
- Training & Development

Boosting Your Job Search with NetWeaving

If you look closely at Bob Littell's business card, you will see an interesting title. He's Chief NetWeaver. That's not a title you see every day, but if Littell has his way, one day the whole world will be NetWeaving. Based on the "Golden Rule" and the "pay it forward" concept, NetWeaving changes the dynamic in relationships. "It's helping others and doing it because you genuinely believe that what goes around really does come back around," said Littell.

So what's the difference between traditional networking and NetWeaving? According to Littell, it's a difference in mindset. He points to a problem with traditional networking – the fact that most conversations tend to be on the superficial side. "For someone to truly open up, you have to find a way to get below the superficial level," said Littell. NetWeaving is really about training yourself in every form of communication to ask three additional questions:

1. Do I know someone who could benefit by meeting this person?
2. Could this person I just met provide information or resources to someone else I know?
3. In the short period of time I have known this individual, have they impressed me so much that I need to find a way to get to know this person better and make

them part of my trusted network? And if over time, the quality of their work is such that I say “Wow, I need to find a way to stay in touch with that person and find a way to make him or her part of my trusted network. “

Littell stressed the importance of follow through to SHRM-Atlanta members. “Strong follow through will set you apart as a job seeker and a NetWeaver,” said Littell. The quality and creativity in your follow through can make the difference between success and failure. So go beyond the typical follow up with something that shows you cared, that you were listening...be it attaching an article to an email, including a good tip, or a new connection. Learn more about how to put NetWeaving into practice.

Navigating the Job Market

Participants gained unique insight into the best ways to navigate the job market from a panel of HR industry leaders, including **John Kalusa, Clem Johnson, Brian Pruitt** and **Jim Dyak**. Their top tips?

- The employment landscape has changed. Today, companies are relying on advertisements less and looking to their employees to see who they may know that may be the right fit for job openings. Referrals are key. Companies are also shifting from away from job boards toward corporate alumni boards and social networking.
- Use your downtime during unemployment to hone your skills and get designations and certifications. Consider getting more involved in professional organizations such as SHRM-Atlanta or industry-specific groups.
- Remember, there will always be a customer that needs your skills. Figure out what you do well and find the customer. Be sure to develop and refine your message and communicate the value you provide to potential employers.
- When approaching informational interviews, be prepared. Clearly define your focus and purpose for the meeting. Do your homework and learn about the individual and industry before the meeting. Ask directed questions and don't approach the meeting only looking for a job. Most importantly, don't forget to send a thank you note!

All the tips, insights and information shared throughout the day helped participants gain traction in their job search. The energy in the hallways between the sessions and workshops was high and the buzz was positive. “The SHRM-Atlanta *HR Helping HR* event revitalized my search,” said Amita Rao.

All in all, the day was a slam dunk, a home run, a major touchdown – whatever favorite sports analogy you use. “The SHRM-Atlanta team answered the call to help its fellow members,” said Mary Lynn Miller, Executive Director. “And our commitment doesn’t stop there. We are continuing to provide job search services to members on an on-going basis.”

Copies of the [HR Helping HR presentations](#) are available to SHRM-Atlanta members online at www.shrmatlanta.org. Special thanks to AJC Media and Cox Communications for making this event possible.

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