

How to Find Unadvertised Jobs

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I'm a businessperson. As a businessperson, I find I get a lot of phone calls from private equity companies and so forth throughout the day. I enjoy getting these phone calls, not necessarily because I'm looking for their investment, because it can come with a lot of strings attached. Rather, I'm interested in learning about their perspective of business. They tend to call about the businesses I'm running that are hot at the moment and doing well, where the revenue's increasing.

People in the investment banking business and private equity business are trained as a general matter to go after and learn about industries that are on an upswing. They have a keen eye for spotting areas where there will be a lot of profits and where they can do very well in the long run in terms of using capital effectively to increase the amount of money they make.

An example would be Link Exchange, which was founded by the guy who founded Zappos. A private equity company invested about \$5 million into that, and eighteen months later, their investment was worth more than \$50 million. That's an example of a company that was really on its way up. That's what private equity companies look for.

When I talk to these private equity companies, I like to learn about their ideas and perceptions about the businesses that are doing very, very well and are on this upward trajectory, because I can use that to [help people track down and get jobs](#).

When a company is on an upward trajectory, they tend not to be very discriminating in terms of who they hire. They're also not very careful with their money because there's so much coming in and they're doing so well that they don't really think too far in advance for the future. They're simply thinking, "We're doing very well now. We're going to continue to do well." That's a great thing. They're thinking, "We were doing well. We're going to continue to do well. Even if we bring on extra people, we're going to continue to grow and absorb the people."

If there's a company that's growing like this and doing very well, the odds are you're going to have a much better chance getting a job there, even if there are no openings.

Here's a story that illustrates this dynamic of going where things are growing, as opposed to where things are stagnant. I'm talking about industries. Industries can be stagnant, different geographical locations can be stagnant, and different companies can be stagnant. Or the opposite may be true. They can be growing. Whether it's geographic, industry, and company specific, this can happen.

Google, which has been a booming company for a long time and doing fairly well in terms of increasing its market share of searchers, is trying to find new revenue streams. I think Google employees are allowed to spend 20 percent of their time on free projects, just doing things they like. In addition to this 20 percent, they have a big cafeteria where everybody gets free meals. That's a real example of a company that generates a lot of money despite inefficiencies built into the system.

When companies get older and more mature, that setup doesn't necessarily exist because people try to cut costs, make more profit, and are generally more careful about who they hire. In a company like General Motors or Ford back in the 1950s and 1960s, they were on that upward trajectory too, making greater and greater profits. They had the same kind of thing. They had wood-paneled dining rooms where they were serving lobster and stuff for their executives and huge pensions. These companies, when they grow like that, believe the sun is going to shine on them forever. You want to get into companies like that where things are booming, where they're on an upward trajectory. You can have a [good career](#) there for 10, 20, 30, or 40 years sometimes if you find them at the right time. That's exactly what you need to do.

When I got out of law school, and while I was still in law school, I applied to big firms, like 100 plus people, in Detroit where I'm from, in New York City, and Los Angeles.

When I applied to firms in Detroit, I [sent them my resume and not much happened](#). They would call maybe two or three weeks later, potentially schedule an interview, and I would have to fly out to Detroit at my own expense to do the interview. In the interview, I would sit there with the people. They were nice but the interview was very difficult. They would go over my grades and say, "These grades aren't as great as they could be." They would be almost a little bit suspicious in terms of hiring. The interviewers weren't as friendly as they could be. This was even true despite the fact that I had lots of connections with the city and had worked in Detroit. The firms in Detroit were contracting and weren't growing very rapidly.

I applied to firms in New York. The firms in New York would fly me out, put me up in nice hotels, take me out to nice dinners, and were very nice. In Los Angeles, it was the same thing. Not only that but I was getting offered starting bonuses and all sorts of perks. It was very nice compared to the reception I was getting in Detroit. I ended up moving to Los Angeles instead of Detroit, to some extent based on the treatment from the law firms, and getting many more offers with firms that are considered much better nationally in both Los Angeles and New York than were in Detroit.

What does that mean? What it means and what's so crucial in all of this is the firms in Detroit were part of a contracting market. The firms in L.A. were in an expanding market and the same thing goes for New York. That meant more jobs in L.A. and New York and that's how I was able to get such a good job.

Geographically, you want to be in markets and places that are aggressively expanding. You need to be. It's important to be in a market that's expanding geographically very quickly. It's important to be in a place where there is lots of opportunity. Had I stayed in Detroit and practiced law there for the rest of my career, I probably wouldn't have had as much long-term upward potential as I ended up having in Los Angeles or working in New York. That's something that's very important for you to think about.

Where you are matters. In both cases, in both Los Angeles and New York, I was [applying to places that didn't necessarily have openings](#) but were going to accommodate someone because they had the growth. Places like Detroit were thinking, "Well, we don't have an opening right now but we might."

This whole idea of [job openings](#) is something that's very important for you to understand. In my opinion, an opening is a good sign that the company has identified something. But growing companies, industries, and geographical locations many times will just hire people because they want to have extra people around to help out with their mission, whatever that may be.

They need extra bodies and extra people to really help out because they're growing. Those are the places you want to be. How do you find these kinds of places? One thing I think is very useful is when you look at the job classified ads online or wherever you're conducting your [job search](#), you'll typically see certain companies that have a lot of openings. They'll just keep coming up again and again.

You'll see certain cities that have [lots of openings](#) compared to their size. If you look at a small city and they have tons of openings, that's a sign that something good is going on there. Who knows what could be going on? They could have discovered an oil well. Who knows? But something is going on.

If a company has a lot of openings, it has something going on as well. What do you do? When you apply to a company that has a lot of openings or you find someone inside that company, even if they're not looking for someone specifically like you, many times it makes sense to apply because you're going to have a much better chance of getting a job there and the fact that it has openings is going to make a huge difference.

To make this work for you, look for places that have a lot of openings. When you are job searching and you find companies that have so many openings, they're a lot more likely to create a job for you. [Creating a job](#) for you will be worthwhile to them, especially if you highlight what you have to bring to the table. Even if you basically tell them, "I need a job," you will be surprised at what often happens. Apply to jobs in industries where a lot is going on. [Apply to jobs](#) in geographic areas where a lot is going on. This is exceptionally important. You need to look for boom industries and boom companies.

Here's how powerful this is. An old friend of mine spent a lot of time messing around when he was in college and he graduated with maybe a C average. Despite that fact, he ended up getting an incredible job when he graduated. How is that possible? He chose a major where things were on an upward cycle and where there was a lot of demand. Everything works by this law of supply and demand. You need to go where the demand is.

It sounds like a very simplistic explanation. I'm almost embarrassed saying it because I know it sounds so simple, but sometimes the simplest messages are the most important. The most important messages can sometimes be said quickly. That's an extremely important lesson for you to understand. You need to go where there's the most demand.

How do you [track down these employers](#) that have all this demand or this geographic area that has the most demand? Use the databases available and use employer websites. A site I would strongly recommend is our company's job site, [Granted.com](#), as it lists job openings from employer websites, newspapers, association websites, and many other sources (and is free to job seekers). When you find an employer with a lot of openings, apply.

At all points in time, certain industries are booming and others are down. Even in a bad recession and a bad economy, certain things are doing well and others aren't. You should go where the opportunities are. That's what the smart people do. They go where the opportunities are.

People who do very well in their careers aren't necessarily any smarter than you or I, but they're going where the opportunities are. How do you find that? The best bankers or these private equity people that I told you about are good at it. Studying the market and seeing what people are talking about is a very good idea. If you just ask, "What's booming? What's doing well?" many times, you'll get information.

I walked into a Fidelity investment office many years ago. It was at the end of the summer. I had made a couple thousand dollars and wanted to put it in an account. I said, "What is the hot industry? What is going to be growing?" They said, "Automotive. You have to put it in an automotive mutual fund." I didn't end up investing there I don't think, but I remember I looked at what had happened with what they told me a couple of years later. The office was booming and there were all these people in there. This was a while ago, but the mutual fund had doubled. These guys saw where the market was going. They had some understanding of it and knew.

Sometimes, you can ask people on the inside, "What's booming? What's doing well?" and they're going to know. Once you identify an industry or geographic area that you think is booming, even if that company doesn't have specific openings for you, you should just apply there. This has been my philosophy my entire career: to apply. What's the problem? Apply, call, network, and do everything you can. Apply to these sorts of places that are going to have a lot of openings. Call associations. Many times, associations know who's hiring and where the opportunities are.

You can ask them where you think the opportunities are and they can tell you. They can often tell you what companies or employers they think you should apply to. Many times, they'll even make the introduction if it's an industry and association where there's a lot of demand for people.

You need to remember that most companies and places that hire people are not experts in hiring. They're experts in what they do. Your objective is to be an expert in getting hired. That's what you need to do. Go after those companies much more aggressively. Then they can come after you and you'll have a much better chance of getting hired.