

Sunday, June 21, 2009

More

News, Quotes, Companies, Videos

SEARCH

INVESTING

GET 2 WEEKS FREE SUBSCRIBE NOW!

THE PRINT JOURNAL

THE ONLINE JOURNAL

Log In Register for FREE

U.S. Edition Today's Paper Video Columns Blogs Topics Journal Community

Home World U.S. Business Markets Tech Personal Finance Life & Style Opinion Careers Real Estate Small Business

Family Finances Investing Retirement Planning Taxes Crunchonomics Columns & Blogs How-To Guide SmartMoney.com

TOP STORIES IN Personal Finance



Finding Gems Among Market Laggards

1 of 10

Toyota is Now Top Dog in U.S.

2 of 10

Relief for School Loans

3 of 10

McCa

MARKETWATCH | JUNE 21, 2009

# Look Before You Leap at a New Job

Article

Comments (6)

MORE IN INVESTING »

Email Printer Friendly Share: Yahoo Buzz Save This Text

By RUTH MANTELL

Karen Chopra knows all about the dangers of "first-offer-itis."

It's a condition in which job seekers itch to take the first position they are offered, says the Washington, D.C.-based career counselor. And in this time of high unemployment, more people are inclined to do just that.

But rather than letting her clients succumb, Ms. Chopra will discuss a position's pros and cons with them to figure out how much they like the job versus how much they just want to stop searching.



Jason Greenberg

"Most people hate the job search," she says. "It's an anxiety-producing time. But there are real dangers to taking a job that is not a good fit."

If you're in a job you dislike, for instance, you may not perform well. And if you leave the job after a few months, there will be a short stint to explain on your résumé.

While there can be a tremendous amount of pressure to rejoin the ranks of the gainfully employed, experts recommend that seekers try to curb desperation. "You are planning your career as opposed to just getting another job," says Randy Miller, founder and chief executive of ReadyMinds, a Lyndhurst, N.J., provider of online career counseling and coaching. "Take a step back, be clear on what you want to do. Otherwise, you will be in the same position six months later."

Of course, you must calculate whether you can afford to pass on an offer. Job seekers without any savings may not be in a position to say "no."

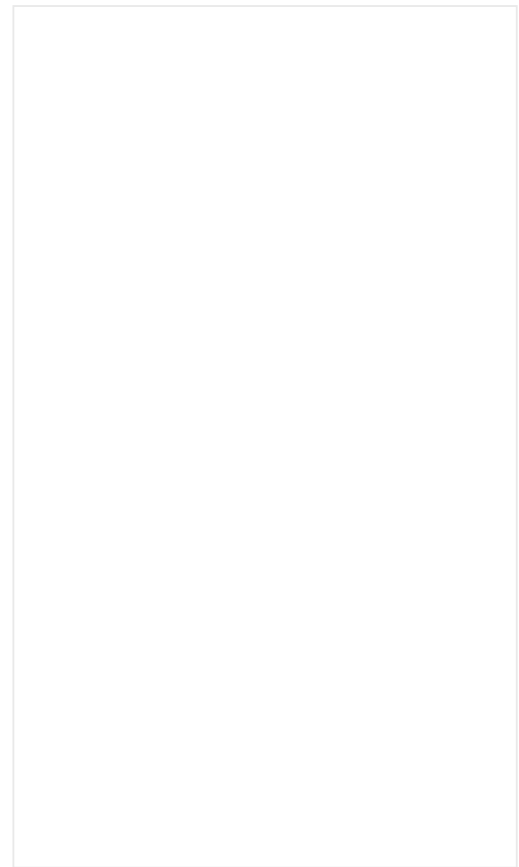
For those who can afford to be pickier, here are five tips on what type of offers to take a pass on and what warning signs to watch out for:

## A Big Step Down

With more than six million jobs lost since the recession began, many job seekers have less leverage when it comes to salary. Nonetheless, a real low-ball offer is a red flag, Ms. Chopra says.

It can be tough for workers to figure out how low is too low, Mr. Miller says, adding that job seekers should stay strong as long as they know they are worth more than a company's low offer.

"In today's times, the employee is asked to do a lot more," he says. "If you are not making the



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

STAY CONNECTED 24/7 VIA EMAIL NEWSLETTERS & ALERTS FROM WSJ.COM

FREE Registration

Sign up Today

## Recent Columns

Look Before You Leap at a New Job

money you are supposed to, you will probably be miserable."

Job seekers also should be wary of taking a title that's too far below their most recent position, says Allison O'Kelly, chief executive of Mom Corps, an Atlanta-based staffing firm specializing in flexible employment.

At least temporarily, a salary can be less important than a title, Ms. O'Kelly says, because "it will be hard to get back into the higher role." She adds that "people looking at your résumé will wonder why you were willing to take such a low-level position. They will think you should be more resourceful and able to find other jobs. I would prefer seeing that you are earning a little less, but that your title remains at a higher level. You will be better off."

### Too-Quick Offers

Jobs that are offered very quickly may be worth passing on, says Walter Akana, a career strategist in Decatur, Ga. "It could be a sign that the company has lots of turnover and [is] desperate on some level as well," he says.

While it can be unnerving, waiting awhile for an offer isn't necessarily a bad thing, Mr. Akana adds. "The company is under pressure to fill the position in the best way possible," he says, "so sometimes the process can take time."

### No Written Offer

Companies that don't provide a written offer may be worth avoiding, says Mr. Miller. And that's particularly important during times when many firms are struggling.

Verbal offers "mean you really have nothing to stand on because the employer can renege," he says. "If it's a legitimate job offer, everything should be in writing."

A contract with a specific description of the job could protect you from having your position radically altered.

"The more you have in the document, the more it could protect you, it's minimizing your risk," Mr. Miller says. "You still run the risk of getting laid off. But it's better to have the piece of paper than nothing at all."

### Too Few Answers

A potential employer's reluctance to answer questions should give you pause, says Ms. Chopra. Employers who are worried that a position may not be attractive to a particular candidate may try to conceal or avoid certain specifics, she says.

Another giveaway: when employers won't allow job candidates to speak with a prospective supervisor.

"You can work for a great company, but have a miserable supervisor, and that determines how you feel about the company," Ms. Chopra says. "The supervisor determines your day-to-day happiness."

### Unpleasantness

If company insiders are difficult during negotiations, you may want to take a pass on a job, Ms. Chopra says. "Generally speaking, your treatment is not going to improve once you are hired," she says.

Write to Ruth Mantell at [ruth.mantell@dowjones.com](mailto:ruth.mantell@dowjones.com)

[Reel In First-Time Home Buyers](#)  
[Spice Up the Index-Fund Formula](#)

## People Who Viewed This Also Viewed...

[On WSJ.com](#) [In My Network](#)

- [Relief for School Loans](#)
- [Advice for Senior Job-Hunters](#)
- [More People Qualify for Car-Tax Deduction](#)
- [To Blog or Not to Blog](#)
- [Finding Gems Among Market Laggards](#)

## Video

<b>Employees Face Double-Digit Jump in Health Care Costs</b> 3:34	<b>How Will New Financial Rules Affect Consumers?</b> 2:46	<b>Target-Date Funds: Not Perfect, but Necessary</b> 3:10
----------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

## More in Investing

- [Big Investors Shift to Indexing](#)
- [India Approves IPO Anchor Investors](#)
- [Are Managed Futures in the Cards for You?](#)
- [How to Value Stocks? Ignore Economic News](#)
- [A Health-Care Fund Steers Clear of Drugs](#)

## Most Popular

[Read](#) [Emailed](#) [Video](#) [Commented](#)

- [Steve Jobs Had Liver Transplant](#)
- [Is the Bull Run Pulling Up Lame?](#)
- [Heavy Security Reins In Iranian Protests](#)
- [The Myth of Prevention](#)
- [Hawaii Unfazed by Missile Threat](#)

[Most Read Articles Feed](#)

MORE IN INVESTING

[Email](#) [Printer Friendly](#) [Order Reprints](#)

Article Tools  
Sponsored by Constant Contact

Share: [b](#) [f](#) [+](#) [in](#) [p](#) [s](#) [su](#) [m](#)

### Sponsored Links

**AARP Auto Insurance**  
Over 50? Save \$388 On Auto Insurance. Start Saving! Free Quotes Now!  
[AARP.TheHatford.com](http://AARP.TheHatford.com)

**Invest in**  
Buy Stocks for \$4. No Account or Investment Minimums. Start Today!  
[www.ShareBuilder.com/Investing](http://www.ShareBuilder.com/Investing)

**4.49% Fixed Mortgage Refi**  
Refi Your Mortgage Now with DPR®! As Featured on CNNMoney & Forbes.  
[DeltaPrimeRefinance.com](http://DeltaPrimeRefinance.com)

Add a Comment

All comments will display your real name. [Go to Comments tab](#)

**Want to participate in the discussion?**

[REGISTER FOR FREE](#)

Or [log in](#) or [become a subscriber](#) now for complete Journal access.

Subscribe Now for Full Article Access and Get

## TWO WEEKS FREE

[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

**WSJ Subscriber's content provides:**

- **Personalized** tracking of industries
- **Heard on the Street:** up-to-the-minute news and analysis that affects the markets and industries
- **Core business news:** "What's News" and new "Management" section

### Related Articles and Blogs from WSJ.com

- [Entrepreneurs Take Second Jobs to Stay Afloat](#) JUN 16, 2009
- [Despite Improving, Job Front Remains Grim](#) JUN 07, 2009
- [California Leads State Job Losses](#) MAY 22, 2009
- [Her Name is Rio, She Sends Work to Foreign Lands](#) JUN 18, 2009

### Related News From the Web

- [The hidden job market](#) JUN 10, 2009  
money.cnn.com
- [Video: Temp agencies offer hope to unemployed workers](#) JUN 09, 2009  
nbc13.com

### Editors' Picks



**Ex-Bank CEOs Become Buyout Pitchmen**



**In the House, It's Peterson vs. Climate Bill**



**The U.S. Open's Giant Water Hazard**



**Finding Gems Among Market Laggards**



**First Pup Unleashes Demand for Water Dogs**

[BACK TO TOP](#)

#### WSJ.com Account:

- [My Account](#)
- [Subscriber Billing Info](#)

#### Create an Account:

- [Register for Free](#)
- [Subscribe Now](#)

#### Help & Information Center:

- [Help](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [New on WSJ.com](#)

Copyright ©2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

#### About:

- [News Licensing](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [About Dow Jones](#)
- [Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
- [Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

#### WSJ.com:

- [Site Map](#)
- [Home](#)
- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Market Data](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Life & Style](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Real Estate](#)

#### Tools & Formats:

- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video Center](#)
- [Graphics](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Alerts](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Journal Community](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [My Journal](#)

#### Digital Network

- [WSJ.com](#)
- [Marketwatch.com](#)
- [Barrons.com](#)
- [SmartMoney.com](#)
- [AllThingsD.com](#)
- [FiLife.com](#)
- [BigCharts.com](#)
- [Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
- [WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
- [WSJ Asia Edition](#)
- [WSJ Europe Edition](#)

[Small Business](#)  
[Corrections](#)

[WSJ India Page](#)  
**Foreign Language Editions:**  
[WSJ Chinese](#)  
[WSJ Portuguese](#)  
[WSJ Spanish](#)