

## Article: Is the New Year really the best time to look for a job?

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### Is The New Year Really The Best Time To Look For A Job?



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Experts share their tips on how to time your job-hunt – all year round.

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How important is timing when looking to change jobs? SXC

You've made the resolution to get a new job or are looking for your first job now that you've matriculated or got your diploma or degree. But, is the New Year really the best time to look for work - or is that just another job-seeking myth? Yes and no, say the experts.

#### **New year, new opportunities?**

According to Natalie Singer, Chief Operating Officer of APSO ([www.apso.co.za](http://www.apso.co.za)) - the recruitment association of South Africa - there's no particular 'right time' to look for a job. However, when one considers that most companies close for the Christmas holidays, it's likely that if they were thinking about hiring new people or starting new projects, they'd put these off until the New Year. She adds: "Traditionally, the start of any year is a good time to look out for a new job opportunity. Companies will begin recruiting for their new projects and to replace staff members who would have waited to resign until January to avoid losing their Christmas bonus or annual leave."

Pat Stewart, Executive Director of Anchor Executive Recruitment Pty Ltd. ([www.anchorexec.co.za](http://www.anchorexec.co.za)) agrees: "You often found that staff eligible for bonuses or a 13th cheque wait for these to be paid out at the end of the year... They are therefore less likely to

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move positions in the latter half of the year to avoid forfeiting their bonus."

She adds, however, that not all companies or positions pay out bonuses at the end of the year: "Positions based on commission or senior staff on incentive schemes may get bonus payments paid at other times of the year - and so openings could arise at any time for these roles."

Many industries also have their own busy hiring times and business cycles. For those in the financial sector, for instance, the first half of the year may be a good time to spot new opportunities: "Financial people handling year-end reporting will finish off the task and then look to move to a better role," notes Stewart, "so these positions arise more frequently from March."

Corporate companies with graduate intake programmes may also focus on the earlier months of the year to place successful graduates. Explains Stewart: "Each year, many students who have to complete internships as part of their studies, are given the opportunity for permanent employment if they prove their capabilities during their internship or graduate programme placement. These positions are all placed in the earlier months of the year."

Adds Karin Chisholm, CEO of non-profit public benefit organisation Career Planet ([www.careerplanet.co.za](http://www.careerplanet.co.za)): "Graduate programmes are a great launch pad into the working world. The trick is not to wait until the last minute. These programmes generally open for application as early as February to April the year before starting. Students should therefore visit the websites of the companies they're interested in regularly."

She also advises graduates to call HR departments directly to verify dates as not all opportunities are advertised on company websites or may still be listed when they have already expired. "And if you miss the deadline, get creative and ask about job shadowing, which can be done all year round and give you a feel for the company or chance to establish contacts ahead of the next intake."

### **Early birds**

"While companies seem to be winding down towards the end of the year, job hunters should not," says psychologist and career counsellor Zakiyya Essa ([www.careerguidancejohannesburg.com](http://www.careerguidancejohannesburg.com)). "Retailers start hiring early for the December holiday season," she notes. So, while seasonal jobs may feel like a step down, you never know if the retailer will be looking to transition holiday staff into more permanent roles. This is also a great time for Matriculants and students to gain work experience - while the rest of their peers are on holiday.

"Companies also have end-of-year functions, which offer great networking opportunities," adds Essa. "And while some companies tend to wait for the New Year to post jobs, this also means that you may be up against more competition. Remember, many companies tend to review staff performance and conduct their planning at the end of year; they are interested in hiring people early in the following year and having your CV in advance may be to your advantage - so use this time of year to work on your CV and get it out there, with follow-up calls in the New Year."

### **Job-hunting all year round**

Ultimately, says Singer, opportunities arise at all times - you simply have to be aware of them. "If you're interested in exploring a new career or are simply starting out, give yourself the best possible chance. Register your CV on the many job portals available, buy the Jobs section of your local newspaper and let your network know you're looking. Often, we secure jobs through word of mouth, and so if your friends, family and associates are aware of your skills and your requirements, you may find yourself being recommended for a position - any time of year."

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