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The Jungle / Focus on Recruitment, Pay and Getting Ahead ♦ By Kris Maher

AFTER BEING LAID OFF from L'Oréal Group in January, Tanya Pushkine Rojas did what most people who suddenly find themselves unemployed do: She scoured the help-wanted ads.

Today, Ms. Rojas rarely peruses ads and almost never responds to them. Instead, she spends 90% of her time networking. She figures that is the best, and only, way to learn about the best jobs. "I know that all the decent jobs are not advertised," says Ms. Rojas, a 44-year-old former senior director of business development and communications. "For anything above director, it's very hush-hush."

The notion that there's a vast hidden job market of openings that never get advertised has been a shibboleth of career marketing firms and certain career experts for years. But does it really exist?

Some recruiting experts today say no. Companies do in fact announce most openings, they say. In addition, with the ever-increasing use of the Internet by corporations, more information about job openings is within job seekers' collective reach than ever before.

"The myth is that 80% of the jobs are not advertised," says Gerry Crispin, a principal of CareerXroads, a Kendall Park, N.J., recruiting-technology consulting firm. "I think that is truly a baldfaced lie that has been fed to the public."

Even if companies are cutting back on costly newspaper ads, more and more are posting jobs on their corporate Web sites. Mr. Crispin estimates that job seekers can track down as many as 80% to 90% of the job openings that exist at a given time by sifting through the career pages on employers' Web sites, in addition to searching other Internet sites and traditional media.

There are only a few categories of job openings that are likely to go unadvertised, according to Mr.



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Crispin. Those can include senior-level positions above director, which can be more difficult to fill, as well as entry-level positions that are often best advertised locally, for example in a shop window. Sensitive situations—a potential contract for new business, or an imminent firing—can also preclude advertising a position.

But Ms. Rojas has a point, career experts say, when she argues that many senior-level positions don't get advertised. Yet even executives can zero in on openings more easily today. A host of Web sites have sprung up to cater specifically to executives who typically earn more than \$100,000. Among them: www.sixfigurejobs.com, www.recruiteronline.com, my.chief.monster.com, www.execunet.com, www.netsharc.com and www.executivesonly.com.

In general, if you want to figure out where jobs are likely to be advertised these days, it helps to think like a recruiting manager facing a tight budget. "You go to your least expensive sources," says Scott Biggerstaff, program manager of electronic sourcing at Sprint Corp., in Overland Park, Kan.

"Most of the Fortune 500 are relying heavily on their Web sites, or on employee referrals."

According to Mr. Biggerstaff, it's customary for many companies to post an opening on an internal Web site only available to employees so that staffers can see it for about a week, before posting it on the external corporate Web site, where job seekers can spot it. After the first week, some jobs may be sent to job boards as well. After about two weeks, company recruiters are more apt to place a newspaper ad or hire a recruiter or a research firm that will furnish candidate leads. Companies also frequently place ads seeking candidates with a narrow set of skills or professional experience, such as accounting, at professional associations or specialized job sites.

At Sprint, about 75% of openings that aren't first filled by internal candidates appear on the corporate Web site, says Mr. Biggerstaff. Job seekers who stick to the big commercial job boards are sure to miss many openings that are only posted on corporate Web sites. "Don't assume that on a third-party

Web site, if you only find five or six jobs for a company that that's all there is," Mr. Biggerstaff says.

Indeed, a recent study by the research arm of Recruitsoft Inc. found that only about a third as many corporate job openings as were listed on corporate Web sites were posted on the three biggest job boards, Monster.com, HotJobs.com and Careerbuilder.com.

One way to search for openings that aren't listed on commercial job boards is to visit job sites that aggregate jobs from corporate sites, such as www.directemployers.com. The DirectEmployers site indexes positions from the corporate Web sites of about 116 member companies. Bill Warren, executive director of DirectEmployers Association Inc., the Indianapolis nonprofit concern that runs the site, estimates that it lists about 150,000 corporate openings that aren't advertised anywhere else.

Choosing a small number of companies to keep close tabs on and network into can pay off in the end. Ideally, you want to apply for a position soon after employees at a company become aware of it, before it gets broadcast beyond the corporate Web site. "What you want to do is generate a referral network" at a select number of employers, because applications that reach a hiring manager by way of an employee referral have the highest success rate, says Ron Krannich, author of "Change Your Job, Change Your Life."

The best openings, of course, often are those that don't get advertised anywhere. That's where networking is crucial. "If you do your networking right and you get in front of people that are thinking about creating a position, you may actually get a job created around you," says Mr. Krannich.

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