

Unemployed? Well, just create your own position

By RICH PERLBERG

The latest best seller will not be available at Norton's Book Store. That's because the store's would-be owner decided not to open shop. Instead, he's jetting to Chicago and a plum, high-paying marketing-research position.

The job is tailor-made for him. He knows it. He designed it, defining the duties and setting the salary.

UNBELIEVABLE, but true. And, according to a growing number of career counselors, that's the way all employment searches should end. Instead, they say, most job hunters rely on archaic, inefficient and well-worn methods that are virtually programmed for failure.

If you are unhappy with your job — or if you don't have a job at all, chances are you will try one of these tried-but-untrue techniques. Lots of luck.

Traditional steps — want ads, employment agencies, reams of resumes, brothers-in-law in the personnel department — put you in a job pool with literally thousands of applicants who all want a single job (that may not even exist if the job is a decoy).

You may as well drape a sandwich board around your unemployed body and parade before the corporate headquarters of IBM. You'd have just as much chance of landing a job that fits your needs and skills, say counselors.

THERE'S ANOTHER way to go about it and that's what Art Norton did.

With a master's in English as icing for his liberal arts degree, Norton turned to teaching. His chalk dust salary eventually forced him to seek greener pastures in sales.

For six years, he did well enough. But he was so unhappy that he was on the verge of chucking it all and opening a book store.

At that time, his company was in the midst of a shake-up. He was asked to stay on. He agreed, but only if he could create his own job. Surprisingly, the powers that be consented. Norton turned to Douglas Hoxeng for help.

Hoxeng, a curly-headed, heavy-set counselor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, is a disciple of Richard

Bolles, whose "What Color is Your Parachute" is the bible of career counseling.

GRAMMING A several-month procedure into four weeks, the hard-driving Norton discovered that he possessed a wide-range of skills.

"I found I had more than 100 functional skills and learned which ones I liked," he said recently. The process is called "owning" your skills.

A word of explanation is necessary. When you or I think of skills, we generally think of what people like Hoxeng call work-content skills — i.e., writing a news story.

The keys to successful job hunting are your functional skills such as establishing a rapport with people, assimilating information, effectively communicating through written words, ability to understand complex issues and so on.

Functional skills are often learned at an early age — almost inbred — and may be the key to what you can do well.

"The thing about functional skills is that they are transferable," said Hoxeng. "You can apply them to other jobs in other fields."

PEOPLE TOO OFTEN limit themselves by being too precise when they list their past experiences, said Hoxeng.

They disqualify themselves from many jobs because they don't feel they have the credentials — a degree in mathematics or four years of experience in data processing — that are often arbitrarily assigned to job openings.

"Most of the stuff you learn is on-the-job training," said Hoxeng. Several studies have concluded that college graduates find their courses bear little or no relation to their jobs.

Take Art Norton. He is now market research director for a company that does \$100 million in sales annually. He has never had a marketing or business course in his life. Not even accounting.

Under Hoxeng's guidance, Norton underwent intensive self-study. By thoroughly analyzing past achievements that made him proud, Norton learned that many of the things that make his

adrenaline flow seemed to match up with the qualities required for marketing, research and planning.

TO SUBSTANTIATE this, he interviewed several people who held similar positions in other large firms.

Never did he ask for a job. Instead, he asked about the work — What do you do? What are you like? What skills do you use? Who else should I talk to?

"I just told them I was researching the occupation," said Norton. "Everybody was more than willing to talk to me."

"Until then, I had spent more time researching papers in college than I had researching for my career."

Armed with more information about market research than anyone at his company knew existed, Norton sold them on the new position.

"Did you know that we are the only company our size without one?" he asked.

'Many employers are just waiting for someone to come in the door and show them how to solve their problems.'

"Why, no. Uh, what does one do exactly?"

"Research, for one thing to find out how we can improve our 3.5 percent of the market."

"Interesting. Uh, can you do research?"

"Absolutely."

AND SO IT went, just like on the drawing board, until Norton convinced his superiors that not only did they need the position, but they needed him to fill it.

But, said his boss-to-be, we don't

know how much to pay someone in your position.

"I know," answered Norton, and he quickly outlined the salary package for nine people in similar jobs in Chicago. One suspects his employer said something like, "Hmmm."

Whatever, Norton is heading to Chicago (where he wanted to live), to a prime office (where he works best) and to a hefty salary hike (a 50 percent increase now and another 50 percent increase in six months) under moving conditions that are enviable (the company pays all costs plus \$3,500 for the "inconvenience" of moving.)

"It beats selling in the streets of Detroit," he said.

BEST OF ALL, he's heading to a job where he is confident that he will excel and to an environment that he is bound to enjoy.

"I know I'll do well because I wrote the job description," he said.

That, said Hoxeng, is the way life is supposed to work.

"Many employers are just waiting for someone to come in the door and show them how to solve their problems."

Toward the end, you must identify your skills, discover what you want to do and where you want to do it, determine where you would be valuable, locate the person who can hire you (he or she is decidedly not in personnel) and then sell yourself.

"The important thing about this system is that it is self-empowering," said Hoxeng.

MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

SUMMER HOME OF THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: Arvid Darov, Music Director

Neville Martinne, Artistic Director

GALA OPENING NITE

June 21, Thurs. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Michael Tilson Thomas, conducting

Liana Vireo, piano

Richard Strauss, Concerto No. 3 in E

for Piano, Op. 30

Saint-Saëns, Two Symphonies

Program: Festo Romane

59-87 \$5 Lawn

June 22, Fri. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Michael Tilson Thomas, conducting

Liana Vireo, piano

Richard Strauss, Concerto No. 3 in E

for Piano, Op. 30

Saint-Saëns, Two Symphonies

Program: Festo Romane

59-87 \$5 Lawn

June 23, Sat. 11:00 a.m.

Children's Concert (admission)

A Toy Store Morning

Alma and Music

Patricia Wind Quintet

Alma and Music

Patricia Wind Quintet

Alma and Music

Patricia Wind Quintet

Alma and Music

Patricia Wind Quintet

Alma and Music

Patricia Wind Quintet

Alma and Music

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Patricia Wind Quintet

June 8, Sun. 7:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 11, Wed. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 12, Thurs. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 13, Thurs. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 14, Sat. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 15, Sun. 7:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 16, Mon. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 17, Tues. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 18, Wed. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 19, Thurs. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

59-87 \$4 Lawn

June 20, Fri. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hayman, conducting

Richard Adler, harmonica

Duo: Harmonica

August 14, Tues. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Klaus Tennstedt, conducting

Horacio Gutierrez, piano

Verde Concerto No. 1 in C

Schumann: Concerto for Piano

and Orchestra Op. 109

Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C

"The Great" D. 914

59-87 \$4 Lawn

August 15, Wed. 8:30 p.m.

Det. Symphony Orchestra

Klaus Tennstedt, conducting

Horacio Gutierrez, piano

Verde Concerto No. 1 in C

Schumann: Concerto for Piano

and Orchestra Op. 109

Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C

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