

How applying for a job became much more expensive – Megan Lawton – BBC

With jobs hard to come by on both sides of the Atlantic, applicants are spending money on everything from recruitment site subscriptions to career coaches and resume-writing software, to stand out from the crowd.

"I'd guess I've spent around \$6,000 [£4,500] on job hunting," says Giovanna Ventola who is 35 and lives in North Carolina. With more applicants chasing fewer roles, Ventola is one of many jobseekers on both sides of the Atlantic who are turning to paid tools to help them secure work.

She says she has spent money on everything from resume/CV writing software, to interview training courses, and premium access to job-search websites. "I was doing more than just submitting applications," explains Ventola, who has been searching for a job in commercial real estate. "There were lots of services that I paid for." Those in the recruitment industry believe this growing trend is linked to a slow job market.

In the US it now takes an unemployed person an average of six months to find a new position, according to official figures. That is up from five months last year. Meanwhile, Canada lost 66,000 jobs in August, pushing its unemployment rate up to 7.1%.

In the UK, job vacancies fell by 9,000, or 1.3%, in the three months to September, official data showed. This was the 39th consecutive period in which job openings had declined compared to the previous three months.

It's having a knock-on effect on job-search platforms like LinkedIn. "Premium subscriber growth has increased nearly 50% over the past two years, and almost 40% of subscribers have used our AI features to improve their profiles," LinkedIn told the BBC.

"We have seen the shift from a candidate market in the past three years, to more of an employer-driven market," says Nancy D'Onofrio, director at Randstad, the multinational HR and staffing company. "There are far less opportunities and there is far more available talent in the market, so it's a really competitive job search," she adds.

D'Onofrio, who is based in Toronto, points to advances in AI as one reason why finding work has become more difficult, a view shared by fellow recruiter Nicole Leeder, senior talent consultant at Adecco. "Roles are changing as companies' visions are changing," says Leeder, who is based in Boston. "It has a lot to do with the rapid explosion of technology. Very few employers today can identify the skills they think they will need in five years."

So how do you stand out in a tough jobs market? "Just applying for a role and waiting for someone to respond is not enough," says D'Onofrio. She doesn't believe candidates need to spend money though. Her advice is to contact hiring managers, attend networking events, and use free online tools to strengthen resumes.