

A Sermon on Finding Gainful Employment

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for February 4th, 2024 (and beyond)

This is a bit of a callback or follow-up on the November 5th, 2023 sermon titled “A Sermon on Employment Paranoia” which is available in the archives here: <https://www.cope.church/emparsermon.pdf> . The challenges with searching for gainful employment vary for each job seeker and may include location and transportation limitations. When location and transportation are an issue, many must first determine whether they can reliably get to the location of any business hiring for positions for which any job seeker may apply. This can mean only applying in person to job creators within walking distance or those accessible through public transit options. Many aging out of foster care live with these two additional obstacles but are not the only ones facing such challenges. Beyond those, most employers go through online recruiting services rather than help wanted ads through local newspapers which means the modern way to find a job is online. Not everyone has internet access and using public libraries rather than private secure connections may put those at additional risk of identity theft and can create an issue for those signing in to said apps from the same shared computer as it may lock you out if too many names are registered using the same IP address or system. It may flag you as a bot rather than a human if using a device shared by many.

Even if using your own personal internet connected device, you are still at risk of clicking on phishing help wanted ads that may even say they are a recognized company like CVS Pharmacies but are third-party phishing sites spoofing a recognized branded employer. One position I applied for was using a third-party employee screening service, but that third-party screening service was not legitimate, and the prospective employer later sent me and likely many other applicants letters stating our private information was compromised. The screening application required an applicant’s full social security number, information on pets, information on favorite colors and hobbies, and family history. The employer required this screening before moving forward with the hiring process and this was confirmed. So, employers who are using such third-party screening services are putting their prospective employees/applicants at serious risk suggesting they are lazy and do not prioritize the health and safety of others. I’ve run into this issue many times and have discontinued any application process that requires I provide any data to a third-party that is not the prospective employer directly.

Beyond the above, being a voluntary consumer advocate through COPE’s HEAL Mission, I’ve learned how to check out prospective employers to see if they themselves are operating above board. I recently applied for a teaching position at a private school and I checked to see if they were licensed, approved by the State as a school, and also accredited to issue degrees and/or diplomas. Thankfully, they check out. I checked for their license here: <https://ccfs.sos.wa.gov/#/>, approval by the state here: <https://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/private-schools> , and went through the list of recognized accreditation bodies here: <https://www.sbe.wa.gov/faqs/accreditation>, and then went through the list of accreditation body websites online to see if the school was accredited by any of the state recognized accreditation bodies. In this case, the school is totally operating above board, and we’ll see if I get that job.

You can use that same link at <https://ccfs.sos.wa.gov/#/> to verify if any business is properly licensed to operate in the state of Washington or if in any other state go to the Secretary of State or Commonwealth website for that state/commonwealth and search for business licensing information which may help you see if the business to which you are applying is legitimate and operating lawfully. This is another step you can take to protect yourself from employment fraud, labor traffickers, and/or other exploitative or unlawful activities including identity theft. These are steps I've added to my own job search which slows things down but is necessary to protect myself. I am refusing some hiring protocols since being compromised by the third-party screening services required by some and that are just phishing while spoofing legitimate companies through online help wanted ads. The recruiting sites rely heavily on AI and algorithms, so trust but do not effectively verify the ads are posted by the actual company given some use third-party services in the initial stages of seeking to fill positions so determining which are fake versus which are real is beyond the scope of something that relies on binary (Yes/No) without exceptions for variables that humans would catch and clean from their services whether recruiting sites or not. They will let you report a questionable one but won't remove it even if you know it is a phishing link because their algorithms still recognize it as valid in some way even if you know it is not. You really need to proactively protect yourself and not assume the sites are actively offering security particularly where such recruiting sites are free for job seekers.

If you are a job creator, please know the above is just some of what those seeking work experience in the quest for gainful employment. By the time of any interview, we've been through more stress than you've ever experienced most likely and are just hoping you are honest, respectful, and truly hiring rather than pretending to for any tax deduction for say a lighted street sign with marquee that also posts job openings where the cost of it can be deducted if used to advertise one is hiring. The same is true for jobs listed on company websites where there are no openings, but if they claim so they can deduct the cost of the website.

If you do not understand why some give up or burnout just looking for work, I hope this sermon helps you empathize and have more compassion for those who try so hard with such willingness to do honest work for honest pay while facing some or all of the above challenges and risks on top of the risks involved with having no income.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.