The Job Market Has Changed. Have You?

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If finding a new role feels harder than it did a few years ago, you are not imagining it.

In conversations with clients, I increasingly hear the same thing: vacancies that would once have attracted a manageable number of applications are now receiving an overwhelming response. At the same time, in Executive Search, I have never received as many approaches from people actively looking for their next role.

And these are not only professionals struggling to find their footing. They include highly qualified executives, experienced specialists and C-level leaders with strong track records.

The Swiss labour market is not collapsing. **But it has become significantly more competitive – particularly in many of the white-collar functions relevant to experienced professionals.**

Why has it become harder?

The numbers confirm at least part of what we are seeing.

In July 2026, 227,200 people were registered as jobseekers in Switzerland – 8.5% more than a year earlier. Registered unemployment stood at 3.0%, with the number of unemployed people up 7.8% year on year.

At the same time, hiring remains subdued. The Swiss Job Market Index showed that advertised vacancies fell another 2.4% in the second quarter of 2026. Particularly relevant for many MBA graduates: over the latest twelve-month period, vacancies for university-level business professions were down 10%, while commercial, administrative and trade specialist roles declined by 13%.

The broader economic backdrop explains some of this caution. SECO expects Swiss GDP to grow by only 0.9% in 2026, well below the historical average, amid geopolitical uncertainty, higher energy prices and pressure on the global economy. Export-oriented industries are additionally dealing with weak foreign demand and, in some cases, the strong Swiss franc.

Restructuring is also putting more experienced professionals into the candidate market. The effect differs significantly by industry, but recent announcements make the trend tangible. Burckhardt Compression announced in August that up to **220 positions** could be affected, including around 150 in Winterthur. Takeda is considering reductions of up to **280 positions in Opfikon**. And following its merger, Helvetia Baloise expects **1,400–1,800 positions in Switzerland** to be affected by its integration.

That last point matters. This is not simply a story of companies stopping recruitment. Many organizations are **hiring and restructuring simultaneously**. They are becoming more precise about where they want talent – and more selective about whom they hire.

So what can you actually do?

1. Activate your network – before you need it

Networking suddenly becomes uncomfortable when the first message someone receives from you in five years is: “I am looking for a job. Do you have any recommendations?”

Good professional networks are built when you do not need anything.

Stay in touch with former colleagues, clients, peers and people you meet along the way. Share information. Make introductions. Have coffee without an agenda.

And once you are genuinely open to a move, activate that network. Tell people. Be specific about what you are looking for. At senior level, relevant opportunities often emerge through relationships before or along-side a formal recruitment process.

But there is another part of networking that is often forgotten: **give something back.**


If you speak with someone in your industry, a company or an Executive Search consultant, do not only ask what they can do for you. Ask yourself what you can contribute. Perhaps you know someone relevant for a role they are hiring for. Perhaps you can share a market perspective, make an introduction or contribute expertise to a particular challenge.

The strongest professional relationships are rarely one-way streets.

2. Speak to headhunters – but understand the model

Yes, relationships with Executive Search consultants are useful. But contacting headhunters is not, by itself, a job-search strategy.

Executive Search firms are mandated by companies to find the right person for a specific role. We are not generally mandated by individuals to find them their next job. Timing therefore matters: there needs to be a relevant search at the moment your profile comes into the market.

Build the relationship, stay visible and keep relevant search consultants informed when your situation changes. But keep expectations realistic: **the right mandate has to exist at the right time.**

3. Make it easy to understand where you add value

At senior level, saying that you are "open to interesting opportunities" is not particularly helpful.

Be able to explain, in a few sentences, what you are genuinely good at. What types of problems have you solved? In which environments do you create the most value? What would somebody hire you to change, build or improve?

Your CV and LinkedIn profile should tell the same story – and both should be current **before** you urgently need them.

4. Stay flexible – and prepare properly

In a crowded market, even strong candidates will be rejected. Do not overinterpret every “no” – but do make sure you control what you can.

Prepare exceptionally well for interviews: understand the company, its strategy and current challenges, and be clear about the impact you could make. The candidates who go the extra mile are easy to spot.

At the same time, stay flexible. Your previous salary, title or industry should not become fixed reference points. Evaluate the **overall opportunity – scope, influence, learning and future prospects – rather than simply trying to replicate your last role.**

Career discipline matters most when the market is difficult

Your network cannot be built in two weeks. Your reputation cannot be manufactured when you suddenly need it. And your positioning becomes much harder to define when you are already under pressure to find something quickly.

The professionals with an advantage are therefore not necessarily those who start searching hardest when they need a job.

They are the ones who were preparing for their next move long before they needed to make one.

About the Author

Fabienne Bezemer has over 10 years of experience in HR consulting, with a strong focus on executive search and recruiting, as well as expertise in performance management and compensation management. Her professional background also includes board advisory services, assessments, change management, and corporate transformation. Fabienne is committed to driving organizational success by identifying top leadership talent and aligning HR strategies with business objectives.

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