

# The Gazette

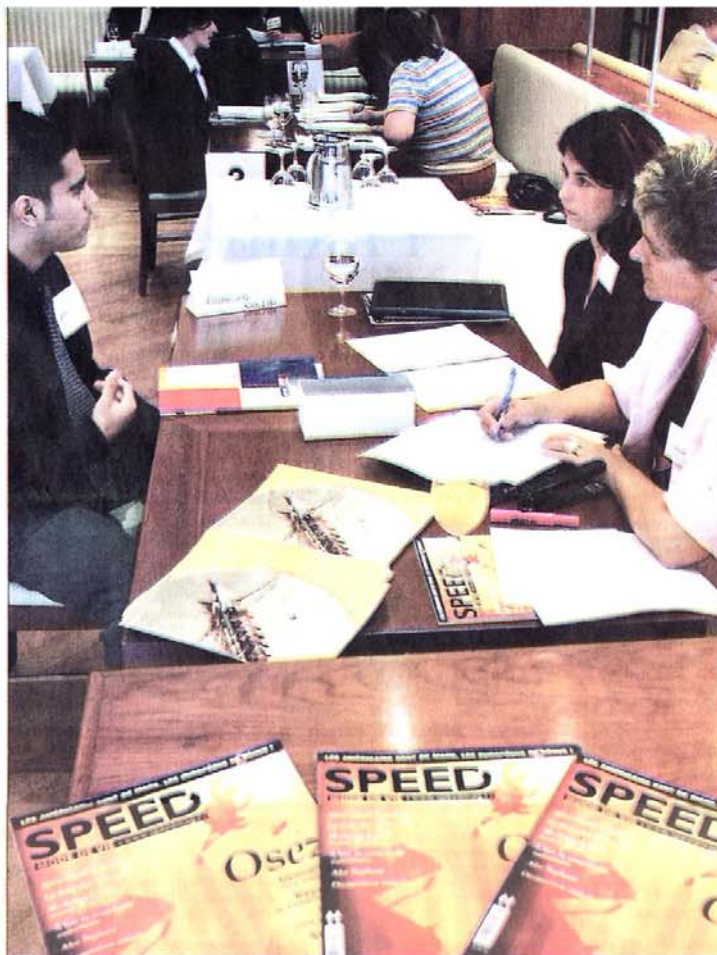
## MONTREAL WORKS

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**Quick work** SpeedJobbing is a forum in which a job-seeker can meet up to 10 employers an hour in **Montreal Works**, Pages B5-B7

# The 8-minute interview

First, there was speed dating. Now, a local company is introducing SpeedJobbing, a forum where candidates can meet eight to 10 employers in just more than an hour



Manuel Mata (left) is interviewed by Sophie Vermeersch (top right) and Linda Robinette of Financière Sun Life at Savannah restaurant. Their encounter lasted eight minutes.

### The anatomy of the quick-hit interview

SpeedJobbing is fast and employers and candidates have to be on their toes to get the most out of an eight-minute interview.

Here's how one SpeedJobbing interview sounded this week, minute by minute.

**Minute one:** The candidate approaches a table and hands her résumé to two recruiters from insurance company ING. One of the recruiters, Marie-Pascale Voyer, explains the job opening is for customer service and not sales. "Some of our competitors are looking for salespeople. Are you OK with working in customer service? The job is also full time," she says.

**Minute two:** Candidate admits she's a bit nervous and says she's finishing a degree. She says she loves working with people in a customer service capacity. "I'm patient and I enjoy negotiating," she says.

**Minute three:** The candidate is asked to describe how she handled a difficult situation at work in the past. She says she worked for a nonprofit organization that worked on behalf of disadvantaged people. "I was constantly dealing with people who had no homes and some with psychiatric problems. I had to listen very carefully to them," she says.

**Minute four:** Employers ask what she would want as a salary. The candidate says no less than \$15 an hour.

**Minute five:** The candidate explains her strengths, including the fact she is organized and focused.

**Minute six:** Would she be available for an interview next week? the recruiters ask.

The candidate explains she's heading for New York but will be available as of Thursday.

**Minute seven:** Candidate asks if she would be given training if she got the job and is assured she would be.

**Minute eight:** The bell sounds and the candidate rises, makes eye contact with both recruiters, shakes their hands and moves on to the next interview.

STEPHANIE WHITTAKER  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

**Y**ou may have heard of speed dating, that phenomenon in which single people vet potential dates by chatting with them across a table for about three minutes.

What if you took that concept and applied it to a job search?

That's precisely what Hakim Chikh did. The founder and president of VoiceJob, a telephone résumé service that allows job seekers to post their résumés on voice mail, Chikh launched SpeedJobbing this week. He invited eight employers to vet 32 job candidates at the Savannah restaurant on St. Laurent Blvd., using the same methods that work in speed dating.

Eight companies, all in the insurance and financial services industries, each sent two recruiters, who installed themselves at tables in the restaurant and conducted eight-minute interviews of all the candidates. SpeedJobbing representatives timed the interviews, sounding a bell after eight minutes when it was time for each candidate to move on to the next table.

"The concept is simple," Chikh said. "You meet between eight and 10 employers in an hour and 15 minutes. It's a time of glory and success because you save

months of e-mailing employers and going to their offices for interviews."

The idea evolved out of focus groups in which job candidates told Chikh it can take them as long as three months to do 10 interviews in various companies. Likewise, employers reported they'd like to be able to cut through the many résumés they receive to get candidates who are targeted to their hiring criteria.

"Employers usually know within five minutes if a candidate is right for their companies," Chikh said. "Also, candidates want to know if a company is going to be a good fit for them."

So Chikh and his crew selected 32 candidates whose résumés were posted on VoiceJob and who met the criteria specified by a group of employers in the insurance industry and the financial sector. The employers were recruiting for customer service and sales positions.

The process is like an accelerated version of a traditional job interview. Candidates meet the employers and hand over their résumés. A quick question and answer period ensues in which employers pitch the merits of their companies and candidates sell their skills.

After interviewing 30 candidates between 9 a.m. and 1:20 p.m. Wednesday,

Johanne Beaulac and Diane Gagné declared that they were pleasantly surprised by the process. The two women, both directors of customer service at TD Meloche Monnex, an insurance company, normally conduct job interviews in their offices.

"SpeedJobbing is very fast, but I don't think the time allotted for it is too short," Beaulac said.

Gagné said the ambiance of the restaurant is less formal than an office and it helped relax the job candidates.

"All of the candidates were well groomed and well prepared. They had done their research on our company," she said.

As an interviewer, Beaulac said, she's skilled at gaining an accurate first impression of job seekers within the first few minutes of an interview.

"We're here to look for people with experience working in call centres," she said. "We use the time to ask them how they succeeded in their previous jobs and what they believe their strengths are."

Gagné said she and Beaulac were watching the candidates to assess how they listened to the questions.

"Our agents have to listen in their jobs when they're on the phone with clients," she said.

Chikh says one key to making the

process work well is to ensure that the candidates have been pre-screened and coached on the interview process. Each candidate was vetted to ensure he or she had the background and education the recruiters were seeking. And all were coached on their interview skills.

Job seeker Erika Raborg, 23, who holds a CEGEP diploma in visual arts, says she was looking for a position in customer service.

"I've just had eight interviews and I found that the process gives you a sense of the companies. The coaching I had before prepared me for the questions I was asked."

Hicham El Ouali, 20, was looking for a part-time position in the financial services sector. A business student at l'École des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, El Ouali said he'd do SpeedJobbing every week during his job search if he had the opportunity.

"It's very quick. They go right to the questions," he said.

Chikh says he'll hold a SpeedJobbing event every month, each time for employers from different sectors. Next month, the event will focus on customer service jobs in the telecommunications industry. November will see a SpeedJobbing event in sales and December will focus on the retail sector.