

Mining for a job

Getting hired can be hard work

February 29, 2012 Adella Harding, *Elko Daily Free Press*

ELKO — Mining companies have jobs to fill and want qualified applicants, but for people seeking a job the hiring process can be daunting.

Barrick Gold of North America and Newmont Mining Corp., the two largest gold producers in the world, are looking for workers for their growing operations in Nevada and they have tips for job seekers.

Barrick's North American office in Elko had 216 job openings one day in February. The company received roughly 30,000 applications last year and filled roughly 1,500 jobs in 2011, according to Dana Pray, recruiting manager for Barrick.

Newmont received 34,000 applications in 2011, but some of them could be from individuals applying for more than one position, according to Nick Tompkins, manager of talent acquisition.

"So, we had 34,000 applications and 600 jobs to fill," he said.

"The point I'd like to make is we're people too. We have a lot of empathy. All of us have had to apply for a job. We know how painful and slow it can be, but, simply, the volume of candidates can be overwhelming," Tompkins said.

The Barrick job openings range from entry level positions that include haul truck drivers, warehouse technicians and lab technicians to skilled positions that include electricians, mechanics and those that require degrees, such as mining engineers and metallurgists.

"We have only so many positions we can fill" from among candidates without special skills that require training, Pray said.

"If we are looking for an entry level position, the first thing we look for is job stability — how long have you held a job. If you jump around to jobs, this doesn't look stable," said Barrick recruiter Helen Magee, adding that Barrick looks for at least two years on a job.

"When you are moving every few months, there is nothing worse on your resume," Pray said.

"We wonder why they are leaving a job. We want to pick the best applicants so we tend to gravitate toward candidates with a steady job history," Tompkins said.

Barrick also wants to know about applicants' safety records and attitudes on safety.



Recruiter Amy Lewis said Barrick asks applicants about any safety violations and whether they have stepped up to the plate to stop potential unsafe acts on the job.

“It is your job to stand up and say something, to be a courageous leader,” she said.

Recruiters also want to know about the attendance record of applicants, such as whether they take a lot of days off, especially calling in at the last minute, Pray said.

Magee said honesty is important for applicants, commenting that a surprising number of people lie on their applications, not realizing they will be caught in that lie because of Barrick’s extensive background checks.

“So, don’t lie to us,” Pray said.

Tompkins said Newmont has a policy of not hiring felons or those convicted of certain high misdemeanors, and background checks will show convictions.

People who had arrests when they were juveniles also might be surprised to know those actions show up too unless they have hired attorneys to get their records expunged, he said.

Those with juvenile records may be hired if they are honest about their convictions, Tompkins said.

Applicants also should know that if they make it through the initial application and interview process and receive a job offer, they still face drug testing, background checks and calls to references.

“We are a drug-free environment. We do hair testing that goes back three months. We also do an alcohol test,” Pray said. “We are going to start testing for spice.”

Newmont follows similar procedures, Tompkins said.

While applicants can fill out applications for any number of jobs, Pray said Barrick prefers they “take charge of their own job search” and apply only for jobs they know they might be qualified to hold.

“We like to hire people with goals and objectives,” she said.

“Barrick strives to pick the candidates who are best for a position,” Lewis said.

The hiring decision lies with the department supervisor for a particular job, while the recruiters find the best candidates, “so the decision is not just made by one person,” Magee said.

Tompkins said another track for job-seekers is to work at a mine for a temporary job agency, because they then have a better chance of getting on full time.

He also suggested that military candidates explain what they did in the military in layman’s terms, and that all applicants go into detail about the tasks they performed in prior jobs. All applicants should show up for an interview on time and appropriately dressed.



“Maintain eye contact. Don’t put your feet up on the table. You are not at home, you’re looking for a job,” Tompkins said. “Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification, and try to relax. Candidates should be positive when they get asked for an interview.”

Lewis recommended applicants be patient. If they don’t get a job now, they can try again later because often there is more than one candidate for a particular job, and they can’t all be picked.

Both Barrick and Newmont respond to computer applications with an email, and they call candidates for interviews. They also let people know after an interview if they didn’t get a job. However, with thousands of applications, recruiters can’t talk to everyone.

Barrick recruiter Maria Anderson said it’s important candidates have email addresses and voice mail so they can be contacted.

Tompkins said one of the complaints is that applicants never hear back. He said if applicants apply only to the general interest category rather than a specific job opening, they receive a thank you email but that’s it.

He also said there are job-seekers who hand a resume to someone who works at Newmont and think it will “somehow magically get to the person hiring.”