

Helpful Tips for the Newly Unemployed

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With the recent economic downturn, millions of qualified American workers in good standing are being laid off by their companies. Many of these employees have had double-digit and often double-decade years of service with their employer. The sudden change in status is an enormous blow not only to your income and ability to support your family, but also to your self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. Having a place to go every day, where you can be productive and from which you can derive a sense of satisfaction, is a key stabilizing factor in your life.

As a professional recruiter, I speak to people dealing with this situation every day—good, highcredentialed people laid off in 2008 or as early as last week. Here are some tips on how to cope that I have been sharing with all the candidates I've been speaking with:

When you get laid off . . .

- **Do** take a vacation, but end it at a certain date. You might give yourself exactly *three days* to do absolutely nothing—take a couple of days to watch every series and movie you've missed on DVD, hang out, do fun and lazy things, sleep until noon, etc.
- After those three days, get busy and **stay busy**. Treat your search for a job the same as you would treat a project at work.
- Make it your job to find a job.

Every weekday . . .

- Get up early and at the same time every day.
- Go to the gym or for a run if that was your pre-work habit.
- Shower and get yourself looking polished (make up, hair care, etc.)
- Get dressed in business casual clothing, as if you were going to work. You **are!**

Do all of the obvious things:

- Update your resume.
- Create or update your page on Facebook **and** LinkedIn.
- Start reaching out to all of your professional/work world contacts, let them know that you're looking and what you are looking for, send resumes where appropriate, and line up references and letters of recommendation.
- Reach out to all of your old classmates, everyone you've ever known from everywhere.
- Post your resume on professional/skilled work job boards and school-related outlets.
- If there's a government or school-related placement office, go there. Browse their job listings and post your resume there.

Do some less obvious things:

- You can extend your "vacation" by every day that you take on **active** projects in your home and outside your home that you have delayed.
- Clean out your garage, attic, basement, closets, and bedroom (this is good for the soul).

- Hold a garage sale or stoop sale.
- Donate old clothing and stuff you can't sell to a cause that needs it.
- Take a day to go to museums or art shows or a cultural activity that inspires you and feeds your soul.

Feeding your soul is valid self-care to help you find a new job/career!

Remember, unstructured time is the enemy. When you hang out and watch TV, it eats at you and makes you feel guilty and badly about yourself. You can end up in a downward spiral of feeling badly, which saps your motivation; the lack of motivation keeps you from being productive, and that, in turn, makes you feel even worse.

Do not let idleness gain a foothold!

Now REALLY GET BUSY:

- Make your own business cards on the Web or professionally, if you can afford it.
- Research free training programs on the Internet. See if programs are available **in real life** in your community, through houses of worship, government programs, civic organizations, and **take one** (or two).
- Take a class; brush up your skills; learn new skills.

Volunteer in your community!

- Get out in real life where you can **meet people**.
- Always bring your business cards and hand them out liberally.
- Keep extra resumes in your car, briefcase, handbag, knapsack, or whatever.
- When you meet someone who could be a valuable business contact, **be prepared** to give them your card or resume. **Get that person's phone number and email address!**
- After you've given out your business card or resume, call or email that person within 24 hours (the sooner the better) to follow up with them on any opportunities they may know of that would be a fit for you.
- Also keep in mind that when you help others, you will keep your skills sharp and feel needed and **good** about yourself. That is **huge** in terms of feeling good about yourself and nurturing your motivation to keep going!
- **And** you can include your community service on your resume!

Be mentally prepared to sit for many interviews.

- If you are someone who is accustomed to walking in, nailing your first interview, and getting the job, for now that situation is **over**. Competition is that intense. Instead, be prepared to sit for 5-10 interviews or even more.
- Treat **every** interview as a learning experience. Even if you don't get the job, the interview itself is still a valuable experience in which you get to rehearse how you present yourself, your qualifications, and your skills. With practice, you inevitably become more at ease and more skilled in touting what you have to offer.
- Again, if you don't get the job, don't take it as a judgment against you or the value of your qualifications. Someone else may simply be a better match based upon the finer points of their credentials or experience.

A special note for professionals seeking jobs:

Professionals should avoid general all-purpose job boards. You're better off posting your resume in boards specifically targeted to your area of specialization (like APICS for Supply Chain Professionals or AICPA for CPAs).

If you are a professional worker (accountant, engineer, EHS supervisor, supply chain manager or account manager, teacher, healthcare professional, regulatory affairs professional, etc.) -- the kind of professional dealt with by professional recruiters -- take care not to overexpose yourself on public boards on the Internet, like Monster and CareerBuilder.

If your resume is posted all over creation, or if you apply directly to employers, you can eliminate the motivation for recruiters to work with you. If it is likely that employers in your field already have your resume (because you submitted it directly, or they pulled it off Monster) in their files, then a recruiter will not get credit for bringing your resume to the employer's attention. Accordingly, the recruiter will be precluded from representing you, and your resume will stay buried in the employer's files.

Instead, do your research to locate job boards specifically aimed at your field or profession; post your resume in those boards, and do reply to job ads listed by recruiters. Take care to reply ONLY to ads for jobs for which you can be fairly considered a match -- that is, jobs where your experience and credentials do match at least 3 of the MUST-HAVE requirements posted in an ad. That is the best way to make a valuable and truly productive contact with a recruiter who actually works in your field and will be proactive in helping to market your resume for the job listed or other jobs similar to it.

These are just some beginning tips. The key is to keep yourself busy, productive, and feeling good about yourself while you hunker down to find a good job.

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