



MAKING YOUR JOB SEARCH A SUCCESS

After a divorce or the death of a spouse, you may be concerned about how you are going to maintain your lifestyle—especially if you lack adequate savings or investments. Perhaps now's the time to get a job. But how do you get one?

Many people who have been out of the job market for a while find the thought of re-entering it daunting. Nevertheless, there are things you can do to ease your re-entry and to make your job search a success.

REVIEW YOUR FINANCIAL STATUS

Before contacting that first employment prospect, review your current financial status. List your basic expenses (food, clothing, rent or mortgage, transportation costs such as gas and car maintenance, entertainment, utilities and taxes). How much do they cost you a month? That will give you a good idea of the kind of the salary you require.

In addition, you should check your investments, savings and other income streams. Job-hunting experts usually recommend that individuals have at least three to six months of savings or other liquid assets available to support themselves while looking for a job if they are not currently working.

UPDATE YOUR RÉSUMÉ

After you've evaluated your financial situation, update or create a résumé. A résumé is an overview of previously held jobs, skills and education.

It is easier to write a résumé if you have an employment track record than if you have little or no prior work experience. But if the last job you had was 10 or 20 years ago, you might want to focus your résumé more on your abilities than on your job history. If you've spent most of your time as a homemaker, you may have developed organizational and budgeting skills that will transfer to the business world. If you've done volunteer work for a school or a charity, so indicate on your résumé and note how your efforts contributed to the organization's success.

IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS

Of course, you may find that your skills don't quite match what businesses currently need.

New technologies have changed the way organizations do business. For example, most office jobs require some knowledge of computers and software programs such as MS Word and Excel. Even many jobs in industry or service, such as automobile mechanics and retail store clerks, have technological aspects that were unknown even 10 years ago. Fortunately, these skills usually are easy to learn by attending a school or training program.

NETWORK

Often the best way to get a job is through a referral: someone recommends you to a potential employer. So contact family, friends, former college roommates and so forth to let them know you are looking for a job and what type of position you seek.

You need to do this tactfully, of course. Outright asking someone to recommend you for position with his or her employer can be a turnoff and could destroy a relationship. But a casual conversation or a brief e-mail or letter saying that you are in the job market and that you would appreciate any advice gets the message across. And it's OK to follow-up every few weeks or so as long as you don't make yourself a pest.

One of the best ways to network is to join an association in the profession or industry you want to work in. Go to their meetings and discuss your job search with members. Even better, volunteer for a group project. This gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your abilities, and by working with fellow professionals, you will show them what you can do for an employer. Some organizations reduce membership rates for people who are out of work, or they will allow prospective members to attend a few meetings without paying for a membership.

CHECK THE ADS

Years ago, many people looking for a job would check their local newspaper's classified ads first thing every morning. But while newspapers still carry job announcements, many jobs nowadays are posted over the internet on websites like www.monster.com or a professional association's website. Many of these websites not only list positions that employers want filled, but they also allow job seekers to post their résumés for a small fee or no fee.



Employers, too, often list job openings on their websites.

DON'T OVERLOOK THE OBVIOUS

Websites and newspaper classifieds aren't the only way to find job openings, however. Look around you. Are there new manufacturing plants or stores opening in your area? If so, they likely are looking for people to fill positions. Go knock on their doors. Even established businesses that you visit while shopping or running errands may post a hiring notice in their window or have a sign indicating that they welcome applications.

REHEARSE THE INTERVIEW

Before you are hired, the employer probably will interview you. This is the time to put your best foot forward. Practice the interview beforehand to minimize your fears and to develop appropriate responses. Have a friend ask you typical questions an employer might ask and videotape your answers. Then review the tape and determine what you could have done better.

FOLLOW THROUGH

When you have returned home from the interview, write a brief thank-you note to the employer. Mention something that you found interesting about the company and stress the contributions you could make to the organization. There's no guarantee that every interview will result in a job offer, but experts say that employers are more likely to hire applicants who send a thank-you note than those who don't.

HAVE PATIENCE

Getting a job takes time. Yes, some people can get a new job in a matter of days, but for most people it will take at least several weeks or longer. The important thing is not to become discouraged. Experts advise job hunters to approach their search as a job in itself. They should set regular hours for writing letters of application, researching prospective employers, making contacts and so forth. Successful job seekers usually are those who work hard at it.

DO PART-TIME WORK

While applying for that dream job, you may find yourself running out of funds faster than expected. To stem the flow, you could take part-

time work. Part-time jobs often are easier to get than full-time positions. Too, part-time work sometimes can lead to full-time employment with the organization or, at least, provide additional contacts.

BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR

You also may want to consider going into business for yourself or working on a contract basis. Is there a service or business that your community lacks? Perhaps you can get a bank loan and open a new store or obtain a franchise, for example, to fill that need. And many businesses would rather hire consultants than new employees.

REWARD YOURSELF

Throughout your job search, maintain an optimistic attitude. Employers don't hire people who appear depressed, and your contacts are unlikely to recommend you if you come across as morose. One way to keep a positive outlook is to periodically reward yourself for sticking with your job search. For example, treat yourself to a movie if you've sent out a targeted number of résumés for a week.

And when you do land that job—and you will!—tell your friends and colleagues. Say that you appreciate the help they gave you during your search. Even better, offer to be a referral should they ever find themselves out of work. They'll be glad to hear that. 🎯

