

Laid off? Strategies to help you locate a new job

Some common questions received from laid off workers include:

1. How do I best commence a job search?
2. What are some modern job search strategies that I should be aware of and employ?
3. Where can I get current information and assistance?

The answer to these questions can vary from person to person and situation to situation, but overall there are common themes and strategies that apply. The key to starting a job search is to simply get started.

Many people take a "denial vacation" when they are first laid off, thinking if they simply avoid the problem, it will go away. Unfortunately, it won't. Job searching in today's competitive market means that job seekers must engage in savvy strategies to get themselves noticed and selected among a sea of competitors.

So although it's OK to take a few days off to clear your head, you want to try to commence your job search as soon as possible.

Develop and Execute an Action Plan

To help keep your job search focused and on track, create an action plan and start executing it. This plan should include a number of modern job search strategies, including:

1. Research: From the comfort of your home, go online and start researching industries and companies that are currently hiring. Identify and explore companies of interest and then locate key decision-makers or personal connections in these organizations. LinkedIn is a great site to research and connect with people of interest. Arm yourself with as much information as possible to support search efforts.

2. Network: Network often and consistently (virtually). Often, jobs aren't posted – so you need to leverage your network to identify possible leads, opportunities, or unadvertised openings. If you continuously network you will build a robust group of connections to support both your current job search and future employment endeavours. Aim to create relationships so people can become 'internal champions' for you within target organizations. Referrals can escalate application chances.



3. Ask quality questions: Instead of simply asking people to help you find a job, spend efforts inquiring about opportunities, leads, or information that will support your job plan. For example, if there is a company that interests you, try to connect with people who work there to learn about the company culture. Or, seek an introduction to a person working in a field or role of interest and ask them how they got their placement. The more information you are armed with, the better career decisions you can make.

4. Build a strong online presence: Ensure your LinkedIn profile is complete with current content, industry keywords, and clear value to help get you passively located by employers and recruiters. Almost all recruiters are on LinkedIn, so you must be, too. Increase your online visibility by consistently engaging on the site. Share thought leadership posts related to your field, post thoughtful and engaging comments on posts, and build connections with key decision-makers.

5. Update career tools: Include recent employment and career achievements on your resume and be prepared to customize content for every application. Employers need a clear demonstration of why you are the best candidate for them. A generic resume will not cut it. You need a resume that directly aligns your skill sets with each job's requirements, especially if your resume might be read by an applicant tracking system.

Create a Routine Task List

Next, create a daily or weekly task list to organize your actions. Allocate dedicated time each day to focus on your job search. Without a systematic approach, you might find yourself going about the above strategies in a haphazard way, causing a slowing of momentum or motivation.

A weekly task list might include the following:

- Conduct 30 minutes of online research each day to help build a target company list.
- Carefully evaluate 2 companies of interest. Check out websites and LinkedIn company pages to learn more.
- Reach out to 3 contacts with a meaningful message. Most people have something in common right now (challenging times). Reach out to ask how people are doing to re-engage in conversations.
- Request an informational interview or virtual coffee date with a friend or connection who works at a company of interest. Ask this person for additional leads.
- Brainstorm 3 new career achievements and use them to update your resume or LinkedIn profile. Keep and maintain a brag file to help with ongoing updates.
- Invest in learning to expand skillsets. Look for online classes, workshops, or seminars that you can complete from home.

A job search is often likened to a marathon, not a sprint. It is going to take time and some serious effort. To keep yourself focused and engaged, especially during periods of doubt and increased anxiety, keep yourself accountable with a task list.

Access Current Information and Assistance

For many, every day of unemployment builds stress and uncertainty, yet the time it takes someone to find work will vary, factoring in the type of role being sought, the number of openings in the target area (who is hiring and where), a person's qualifications, the efforts of the job seeker, and of course the economy itself – which we all know is currently struggling.

Many companies are laying off, but many companies are also hiring. Remember, remain active. Now is not the time to pause efforts!

To access current hiring information (which may be changing day to day):

- Conduct specific Google searches for your target job and region. For example: "Project Manager Melbourne" or "Business Development Director Adelaide" can narrow results.
- Read the news to identify what companies or industries are hiring (add these companies to your target list if a potential match exists).

- Go to job boards and look for current postings. Jobs posted in the last 2 weeks are likely the most recent and active.
- Search for and join job search groups. Do any exist in your community, online?
- Visit LinkedIn and use the hashtags #coronavirushiring or #hiringnow to locate postings.
- Read your LinkedIn feed for information, postings, or insights.
- Follow key decision-makers or companies of interest on social media.
- Set up Google alerts to get notified when certain job postings or hiring details are published.

Finally, remember that job searching is a tough task, but it isn't a task you have to go about alone. Put together a team of trusted individuals that you can turn to for advice or keep you motivated and accountable. These people may include certified career coaches, resume writers, or employment experts – along with supportive friends or family.

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