

Put Your Job Search into High Gear

If you're looking for a job, now is an ideal time to renew your energy and focus. Forgive yourself for the things you wish you had done differently, i.e. something you said, or didn't say in an interview, regret that you avoided networking events or frustrated that you didn't reach out to people on your target list. If you keep a running list of "mistakes" you've made, as many job-seekers tend to do, now is the time to let it go. Learn from your past experiences and acknowledge that you will try to do better in the New Year.

Here's a way to start:

- Google yourself. Many people don't think to do so. A quick search can reveal a lot to a potential hiring manager. Make sure you know what comes up when someone types

in your name.

- Build your network. Learn how to use LinkedIn effectively. Whether you are seeking a permanent position, contract work or looking to expand your business, LinkedIn is invaluable for networking, sharing and receiving information and ideal for connecting with former colleagues, clients and classmates who may be able to help you in your search. If you've lost touch with someone and want to reconnect professionally, chances are you'll find them on LinkedIn. Invite them to connect, meet for coffee or send them an article that may be of interest to them.
- Don't isolate yourself. Being unemployed or underemployed can be stressful, discouraging and can lead to anxiety or depression. Talk to

a family member or friend or join a support group. A job or financial assistance may not be offered, but a supportive shoulder can help you stay motivated and connected.

- Exercise and engage in activities that feed your spirit. Volunteer, read, dance, make music, spend time with loved ones, see a therapist... you are more than just an unemployed person.
- Stay current with technology. Mature job-seekers often attribute not landing a job to ageism. However, a candidate's discomfort with technology or lack of technical skills can be a bigger barrier to employment than age. Westchester County One-Stop Employment Center, Westchester Community College and the County library system all offer courses on basic computer

skills for free or a nominal fee.

- Ageism is real and it does take longer for older job-seekers to land. Having said that, in my experience, age is not necessarily the only determining factor in whether or not a job is offered. In certain industries or companies, age looms large, e.g. tech start-ups. Knowing this, don't waste time applying to these companies. Focus on jobs and companies that align with your experience.

If you have been invited for an interview, it is likely the recruiter or hiring manager has glanced at your LinkedIn profile—be sure to have a current profile picture—and probably also Googled your name. As a result, he or she already has a

sense of how old you are, so stop stressing about your age and start preparing for the interview.

- Be prepared! Research the company and interviewers and practice, practice, practice. While you don't know exactly what will be asked in an interview, basic questions you can anticipate and be prepared to answer are examples of past career successes, a challenging work scenario you resolved, and experience or skills that make you the ideal candidate for the position. Refine and practice your answers OUT LOUD. Show you've done your homework by asking thoughtful questions about the company and be sure to email a thank-you

note to each person with whom you met.

Being unemployed can impact every area of your life, from your relationships, to your finances and even your sense of self. Ultimately, you cannot control when or where you will be hired but, the good news is, much is within your control. These tips offer a good place to start.

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