

Tackling the stages of a job search

Everyone has been touched by the 2009 economic downturn. Many people know someone who has lost their job, or they may have experienced a layoff personally. Economic experts may not agree on the timing for a recovery, but all agree that new job creation will be in different industries than the jobs of the old economy.



Treacy Crowley

How do you find your place in that new economy? How do you target these new jobs when you are looking at a layoff notice? There are some short-term steps that you can take to help shape your long-term job search, and there may be more resources available to you than you think.

Inform friends and pass on your contact information

First of all, let your family, friends, and immediate network know of your recent layoff, and forward your new contact information to them. Tell them you will be in touch shortly with your plans for your "next steps" and what they can do to help you. People respond best to specific requests and are more willing to assist if they know that you have done your homework and have a direction in mind.

Take advantage of outplacement services

If your employer provided you with professional outplacement services, take full advantage of the services. If not, similar support

services are available free of charge through community resources including Employment Connection, the Cuyahoga County Library System, Cuyahoga Community College, other community colleges, and four-year universities. These agencies offer career exploration services, as well as resume-writing workshops and services to assist you in preparing a resume.

For example, the Career Transition and Development Services at Tri-C can help you assess your skills, plan a career path, and determine what type of training and education is best for you. You can also search computer databases, tailor your resume to different applications, and practice interviewing skills with trained experts.

Take financial inventory

The next step is to take a financial inventory and set a budget. How much money do you need to earn in your next job? It may take six to 12 months to find employment, and you will need to budget accordingly. What current expenses can be cut back or eliminated, and what spending habits do you need to curtail? You may need short-term employment to make ends meet, but it helps to have a long-term goal in mind.

Develop a plan

Begin to develop a plan about where you want to go next. Will it involve more education? Talk to potential employers, and go online. Read job descriptions and requirements. Does your education or technical training match the requirements you see for open

jobs? If you haven't kept up with changes in your field or industry, chances are, you will need to update your skills and training in order to be competitive in the job market. Also, look broadly at your prior work experience and educational background and consider what skills may transfer to a new industry.

Present yourself professionally

The next stage is to focus on how you present yourself. Think about what specific companies you may want to work for and target them through social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

In addition, make sure you clean up your own social media presence. Companies are using social media now not only to "tweet" job openings but to check on current applicants. In fact, 40 percent of recruiters report that they look online to gather information about candidates. Make sure that what you post is professional and accurately depicts the image that you want an employer to see.

And, most importantly, when it comes to presenting yourself, a professional resume is a must. Create a resume that is a clear, concise, and an accurate presentation of your experience and education.

Join a job network

Consider joining a job network. There are networks throughout Northeast Ohio, including community-based, faith-based, and library-based groups.

The Maple Heights Library also has a Career Center with comprehensive resource lists for job seekers.

Job groups are becoming more sophisticated and often include presentations by experts that relate to job search, personal development, social networking, and other valuable skills.

Job groups can be a valuable support and networking opportunity. You will meet others job-seekers in transition and learn about opportunities that may not be posted to the public. Joining a job group will force you to network. It's often too easy to cocoon yourself in your house, staring at the computer, but it is critical to get out and interact with people.

Practice your "elevator speech"

Once you have a direction and can sum up your skills, talk to everyone you know. Don't think of it as "networking," but merely a conversation with people who can assist you.

Practice delivering your personal "elevator speech," which outlines your skills and experience. Talk with people and share your experience and background. It can help you get beyond feeling awkward prior to interviewing for a job that you really want. And, after landing the job, it is important to stay in touch and continue to network.

The 2009 economic downturn has forever changed the job market, and therefore, the job search process. More than ever, job seekers need to use all available resources to be competitive in the job market, including outplacement firms, community services, colleges, networking groups, friends, and family. By taking steady and thoughtful steps toward a new career, job seekers can prepare themselves for all elements, expected and unexpected, that come with a job search.

Treacy Crowley is the executive director of the Career Development and Transition Services at Cuyahoga Community College. Tri-C is a member of the nationwide Walmart Brighter Futures Project. The Walmart Foundation and The Cleveland Foundation are funding-enhanced support services to the unemployed in Northeast Ohio. For more information or to make an appointment, call 866-933-5180.

