

SmartMoney

CONSUMER ACTION by AnnaMaria Andriotis

Published August 7, 2009

How to Find a Better Job in a Weak Job Market

WITH THE COUNTRY'S UNEMPLOYMENT rate at a 26-year high, finding a new job can seem impossible, whether you're unemployed or in the work force and looking for a change.

The unemployment rate fell to 9.4% in July, down from 9.5% in June, when the economy shed 443,000 jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Meanwhile, the number of people collecting unemployment insurance rose by 69,000 to 6.3 million during the week ending July 25, according to the Labor Department.

And it's likely we haven't yet hit rock bottom. Beth Ann Bovino, a senior economist at Standard & Poor's, says she expects unemployment to peak at 10.5% during the third quarter of 2010.

Meanwhile, the employment situation for those who have jobs isn't exactly rosy. As more companies file for bankruptcy, get acquired or announce layoffs, job security becomes murkier, says Jay Meschke, the president of EFL Associates, a senior-level executive search firm and a wholly-owned subsidiary of **CBIZ** (*CBZ*). Workers who begin looking for another job while still employed will have to maintain their productivity and keep their bosses unaware of their intentions.

Here are seven tips to finding a better job during the downturn.

Update your resume

The days of listing responsibilities – like screening calls for your boss, working on team projects or meeting deadlines – are over.

"Resumes have evolved from a record of what you did to a marketing piece for your achievements," says Katy Piotrowski, president of Fort Collins, Colo.-based Career Solutions Group, a career counseling company.

Use your resume to quantify your accomplishments, including increasing productivity, sales or savings at a prior job by implementing a specific process, says Joyce Gioia, president and chief executive of the Herman Group, a Greensboro, N.C.-based firm that advises companies on workplace trends and retention.

Also, focus on the challenges you encountered and the results you achieved, says Laura DeCarlo, the president at Career Directors International, a professional association in Melbourne, Fla.

Try to update your resume – which should be limited to one page – before you start spreading the word that you're looking for a new job. That way, you can distribute your resume at a moment's notice. Should you lose your job, you can start looking for work immediately.

Gather additional paperwork

In addition to preparing your resume, gather documents that reinforce your capabilities as an employee – especially if you won't have access to them after leaving the company. These can include congratulatory or thank-you letters from clients or copies of awards certificates for a group project that you led or helped execute. Showing these to a prospective employer during an interview can give you an edge, DeCarlo says.

Join social networking sites

Expand your online presence using profiles on social networking sites.

LinkedIn.com yields the most result for job seekers, according to the career coaches and consultants we contacted. "[The site] gives you the support structure and connections to people who want to hire you or may know others who want to hire you," Gioia says.

In addition to including information about your work experience and education, you can connect with former co-workers and acquaintances. If you write that you're looking for a job, your connections will see that and may pass it on to their own contacts, says Roberta Matuson, the president of Human Resource Solutions, a Northampton, Mass.-based firm that helps businesses with recruitment. You can also join networking groups on the site, which often post job openings or help users with their search.

Other social networking sites that can help with job searches include Twitter, Plaxo and Xing.

Start networking

Don't wait for a pink slip to dust off your contact list. The best time to make connections (or to revive them) is when you're employed and don't have an agenda, Matuson says.

Maintaining a network is especially important today because roughly 60% of jobs are found through word of mouth and personal contacts – not postings, DeCarlo says. You do not want to appear opportunistic by calling someone you haven't spoken with in a year and asking them for a job, she says.

Stay in touch with your contacts by calling or emailing once every few months, sending holiday cards or meeting for a drink a couple times a year. If and when the time comes, ask them for help in brainstorming companies to which you should apply. Then ask whether they have a contact there or whether they know anyone who is hiring.

Build your reference list

It's also helpful to have two or three references on hand that a potential employer can contact. Consider former bosses, current or past co-workers and any clients with whom you've built a solid working relationship, DeCarlo says.

Before you start giving out their numbers, contact them to confirm that they're comfortable being references.

Pinpoint the companies that need your skills...

Consider your industry and skills and start compiling a list of at least 20 companies that need someone with your background, DeCarlo says.

Try to pinpoint each company's hiring manager and contact them to express interest in job opportunities that pertain to your skills. "You want to connect with the person who would say, 'Yes, I need you on my team,'" DeCarlo says. Try Googling the company name and title, or do a search on LinkedIn.

...and research their financial health

The last thing any job searcher wants is to land at a new company only to find out it's starting a series of layoffs or going bankrupt.

To check on its status, pull up recent news articles on the firm. With a publicly-held company, try sorting through their filings with the *Securities and Exchange Commission*² and for nonprofits try *GuideStar.org*³, which provide details on debt load and profitability.

¹<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/CBZ/>

²<http://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml>

³<http://www2.guidestar.org/>

URL for this article:

<http://www.smartmoney.com/Personal-Finance/Employment/How-to-Find-a-Better-Job-in-a-Weak-Job-Market/>



[SmartMoney Mobile](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Magazine Customer Service](#) | [Subscribe to SmartMoney Magazine](#) | [Your Profile](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[About Our Ads](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Custom Publishing](#) | [License Our Content](#) | [Media Kit](#) | [Press Room](#) | [Events](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Labs](#) |



smSmallBiz™ SMARTMONEY® Layout and look and feel of SmartMoney.com and smSmallBiz.com are trademarks of SmartMoney, a joint venture between Dow Jones & Company, Inc. and Hearst SM Partnership. © 1995 - 2009

SmartMoney. All Rights Reserved. By accessing and using this page, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#). All quotes delayed by 15 minutes. Delayed quotes provided by Interactive Data Real-Time Services, Inc..

Historical prices and fundamental data provided by [Morningstar, Inc.](#) Mutual fund data provided by [Lipper](#). Mutual Fund NAVs are as of previous day's close. Earnings estimates provided by [Zacks Investment Research](#). Insider trading data provided by [Thomson Financial](#). Upgrades and downgrades provided by [Briefing.com](#).

You Are Viewing: [SmartMoney.com](#) — Investing, Saving and Personal Finance.