

## 6 Ways to Energize Your Job Search

By Michelle V. Rafter | May 8, 2012 | 0 Comments

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The outlook for many American workers has improved steadily since the official end of the recession almost two years ago -- but not for midlife and older workers among the ranks of the country's long-term unemployed.

In April, close to 30 percent of the nation's jobless workers had been out of work for more than a year -- a total of 3.9 million people, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data

released this month. Long-term unemployment has become such an issue that some economists question whether the recession permanently raised the nation's unemployment level, according to [this Bloomberg report](#).

A large portion of the long-term unemployed are people in their 40s, 50s and older. During the first three months of 2012, older employees were less likely to lose jobs, but once they did, they were more likely to remain jobless for a year or longer, according to a [Pew Charitable Trusts assessment](#) of the labor bureau's statistics. In April, workers 55 and older averaged 60 weeks of unemployment before returning to the work force, an increase from 55.7 weeks the previous month, according to AARP Public Policy Institute data released late last week.

Many midlife workers held middle-management jobs that were eliminated when companies cut costs during the recession. While the economy is recovering, those jobs aren't coming back. Job seekers who don't take this new reality into account when looking for work will continue disappointing themselves, says [Lisa Quast](#), an executive coach with Career Woman Inc. in Seattle.

"It sounds harsh, but you have to lower your expectations for the type or level of job you're looking for," Quast says. "Look for the company or industry where you want to work and be willing to accept a lower-level job to show off your skills so you can climb back up the ladder within that company."

If you've been out of work for a substantial period of time, here's what Quast and other executive coaches and career counselors suggest doing to re-energize your job search.

**1. Reconsider the work you're seeking.** If you're unenthused about job hunting, it could be a sign you're ready for a different line of work. "There are a lot of people who have been in jobs and haven't really loved them. They're trying to get back in, and their hearts aren't in it," Quast says. If your soul searching leads you to want to switch careers, you'll still have to start by accepting a lower-level job, she says. "Swallow your pride and be willing to put in the effort to dazzle the employers."

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**2. Change your tactics.** You can't change your age or how long you've been unemployed, but you can change your approach to a job search. If you're following the same strategies you used 10 or even three years ago, you're likely to fail. "You can't just submit a resume to a job board," says Kathy Caprino, a career coach with [ELLIA Communications](#) in Wilton, Conn. "You need to build a robust job community to bring yourself to the job market. You have to understand your brand. People roll their eyes at that, but you do. You have to know what you bring to the party, why you're different and better than the competition. You have to be able to tailor your professional story to exactly what a [hiring manager] is looking for."

**3. Build a digital presence.** If you're not on [LinkedIn](#), it's as if you don't exist to corporate recruiters, Caprino says. Use the online business network to create a profile that recruiters will see. You also can use LinkedIn as the basis for an online job community that you can tap into for job leads. The same goes for [Twitter](#) and Facebook, which more companies are using for recruiting.

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**4. Freshen your skills.** If you've been out of work for some time, prospective employers will be concerned that your skills and industry knowledge aren't current. Add your age to that, and you're at a double deficit, says [Phyllis Mufson](#), a longtime career coach and consultant based in Philadelphia. Counter any potential misgivings by taking classes, in person or online. One site Mufson recommends is [Lynda.org](#), where students pay a flat monthly fee for training on WordPress, Photoshop, InDesign and other popular software programs.

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**5. Gain experience any way you can.** Move beyond thinking only about getting a full-time job. Consider all the side jobs you can find to make money and keep your skills up to date. "It's kind of like the side hustles that people had when they were employed full time, just that they aren't employed full time anymore," says [Paula Gregorowicz](#), a Philadelphia area business and career coach.

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**6. Look for internships or volunteer work.** Most companies structure internship programs for college students, so look for opportunities labeled "nontraditional," which is a tip-off that the company is open to working with people of all ages, Mufson says. You also can gain current experience by consulting or volunteering. Both are also great ways to network and keep up with your industry, she says.

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