

Tips for senior job seekers

Judith Jones
Senior Scene

It's been said that finding a job is a full-time job, and that's never been more apt than in the current recession.

Nationally, unemployment is nearing 10 percent, and estimates claim there are six job seekers for every position available. Hidden in the statistics are a growing number of seniors looking for work—some who have lost jobs, some forced out of retirement by financial losses. Others are postponing retirement because of similar losses.

What should you know if you are over 55 and looking for work? The good news is that there are plenty of resources available for job seekers. Here's an assortment of tips from top sites and sources to aid in your search.

Accept the fact that the job search process has changed. – If it's been years since you last looked for a job, know that the world of job hunting has changed dramatically. Choosing the right paper stock for your résumé is much less important than choosing the right keywords for electronic scanning. Don't expect a response to every application or résumé you submit; it's no longer the norm, so you need to be proactive about follow up on materials you submit.

Be tech-savvy. – Basic computer skills are essential not only in today's workplace but also in the job search. Many job listings are online-only. Look for job search sites that match your goals. Email résumés and online applications are common, and many companies screen résumés electronically for job-specific keywords. The Internet can be a powerful tool for researching company prior to making an application or going to an interview. If you're not computer literate, get some training or take a class.

Overhaul your resume. – The days of the "one-size-fits-all" résumé are long gone. Instead of a chronological list of previous jobs, consider drafting a functional résumé that highlights your skills and accomplishments. Streamline your employment history and keep it relevant. Focus on the last 10-15 years and leave off graduation dates. You may need multiple versions of your résumé, tailored to specific positions you are pursuing. If it has been many years since you've updated your résumé, you may want to use professional résumé assistance.

Network, network, network. – Don't limit your job search to the Internet. Networking can lead you to the "hidden job market." Let

everyone know that you are job-hunting. Make use of online networking resources like LinkedIn.com. Involvement with professional associations or volunteer organizations also offers opportunities to make contacts and at the same time demonstrate your employable skills. Consider preparing a 30-second "elevator speech" to introduce yourself and your job search goal when a networking opportunity presents itself.

Be open to options. – Flex-time, part-time work, temp work, job-sharing, telecommuting and consulting all offer alternatives to the traditional nine-to-five workday. If you've always worked a traditional schedule, you may find one of these an attractive choice.

Practice for interviews. – Interviewing well is a skill, and it needs to be practiced. Recruit a family member or understanding friend to ask you sample interview questions. Identify potentially troublesome questions and plan in advance how you will answer them.

Show that you are a lifelong learner. – One of the myths about hiring older workers is that their skills are not current. Find ways to keep your job skills sharp by participating in professional development activities, taking classes, or volunteering.

Explore job training programs. – If you have been out of the work force for some time, you may benefit from a training program that helps you to become more employable. Low income seniors may qualify for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP, pronounced see-sep). Federally funded, and administered locally by Tacoma Goodwill, the program provides part-time community service work-based training for low-income persons age 55 or older. For information see www.tacomagoodwill.org or call Goodwill at (253) 593-7356.

Embrace your seniority! – Your age doesn't have to be a disadvantage in your job search. Many employers are coming to recognize the

value of workers who offer maturity and real-world experience. The AARP (www.aarp.org/money/work) maintains a list of companies that actively seek out older workers. Other web sites that address the needs of older job seekers include: www.retirementjobs.com, www.retiredbrains.com, www.seniorjobbank.com, www.seniors4hire.org, www.workforce50.com and www.quintcareers.com/mature_jobseekers.html.

Remember that help is available. – Your local WorkSource office is a one-stop resource center for job seekers, offering job listings, referrals, workshops, résumé assistance, computer access and more. Online, see www.go2worksource.com.

Lastly, practice self-care. – Job hunting can be exhausting and discouraging. It's important to be disciplined and focused on your job search, but you'll be a better job candidate if you take proper care of yourself. Keep yourself healthy and positive by eating well, getting enough sleep and taking time for yourself. Go for a walk, read a good book, do some gardening, or spend quality time with friends and family – whatever most refreshes your spirit.

Note: Job Club now meets Wednesdays at 1:00 at Mandolin Cafe, 3923 South 12th Street.

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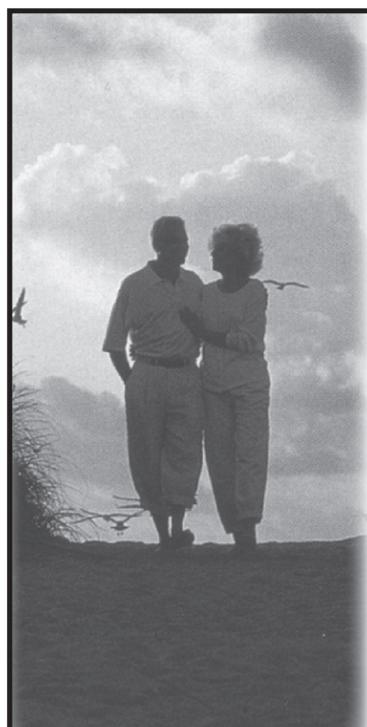
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