

Filling the gap

Some industries are prone to breaks in employment. The entertainment industry, construction and just about anything freelance-related are infamous for this. But whether being unemployed is nothing new to you or this is your first trip to the unemployment office, the key to finding a job is to keep moving.

As a freelance line producer, Danielle Weinstock of Rancho Palos Verdes knows first-hand what being out of work is like. Working in the entertainment industry for 18 years, Weinstock experiences a gap in employment about twice a year.



Weinstock

“We obviously have to meet our basic needs, and often times that means finding a job that’s most readily available,” says Weinstock, who is also the author of “Can This Elephant Curtsy on Cue? Life Lessons Learned on a Film Set for Women in Business” (Smith & Kraus, \$17.95). “But I do think that it’s really important for people to create a nest egg so that if, in fact, it happens again or if you find you’re not in a job that’s satisfying, that you have the freedom and flexibility to redirect your energy, to pursue another career, to take time to further educate yourself. I think that people don’t realize how

valuable having a little bit of financial security can be in helping them move to the next step.”

With the economy in decline, it’s no wonder that the average period of unemployment has increased to 17.5 weeks, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For some, the emotional aspect of being left without a job — whether as a result of a layoff, firing or resignation — can create feelings of depression and lethargy. But the key is not letting those feelings impede your job search.

To avoid falling into this trap, we’ve compiled a week-by-week to-do list for use during your unemployment period.

● **Week 1:** Assess your situation. Do you have any severance pay or other sources of income forthcoming? If not, register with a temp agency to ensure a steady source of pay, even if it’s just part-time. If possible, file for unemployment.

“If they have been living paycheck to paycheck, [the jobseeker] will need to find a source of income sooner rather than later, in which case going to a temp agency would probably be a good idea,” says Matt Grant of Aquent, a nationwide marketing staffing firm headquartered in Boston. “If nothing else, [temp agencies] will get money coming in quickly since most agencies pay you within a week of working.”

● **Week 2:** Let go and move on. Residual feelings of resentment and anger may still be plaguing you. Now is the time to let those emotions go and begin rebuilding your career.

“The time should be seen as an opportunity to focus on figuring out what you really want to do,” Grant says.

“After taking a week or so to recover from the trauma of losing your job — one friend of mine just up and flew to Club Med after she lost her job — you should spend the next few weeks exploring your various career interests and options.”

Grant suggests taking this time to go to informational interviews and talk to people who have similar career goals. These casual meetings could even end up as unadvertised job opportunities.

● **Week 3:** Find your target. Aim for the employers you want to work for. Scour Internet job sites and send your resume to the opportunities you feel qualified for. Call each employer you applied with one week later to make sure they received your application, unless there is a do-not-call notice on the job posting. This step may very well move your resume up to the top of the pile.

● **Week 4:** Put yourself out there. It’s been noted time and again that networking helps you get where you want to be. Reputable professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, are not just an advertising ploy — they work. Statistically, the more people you network with, the more likely you are to obtain job leads.

“Target at least four peer-to-peer professional networking conversations of 15 minutes or more every day; 20 a week,” suggests Dan Weber, a career transition coach and CEO of Peak Pathways in Gretna, Neb. “Continue developing your network and accumulating knowledge about your ideal job along with a written list of what you do not know.”

● **Week 5:** Update and evaluate. Five weeks into your job search, you may find yourself with much different career goals than you had just a month ago. If this applies to you, clearly write out your new career aspirations and tweak your cover letters and resume accordingly.

“By now, you should have met with 40 to 60 professional peers and know who really needs you to provide results for them,” Weber says. “They may not have openings but they need your results even if only you know it. If no one needs what you have to give, evaluate yourself, your efforts, the situation, and your goals; what needs to change?”

● **Weeks 6 to 17:** Rinse

and repeat. The average employer takes about six to eight weeks to hire someone after posting a job ad, so don’t be discouraged if you have yet to hear from anyone. Continue networking and keep up the momentum you’ve created.

— Lisa Schryver, Tribune Media Services



Unemployed? Stats show it may take 17.5 weeks to find a new job. Here’s what to do to speed along the process.