

Imagine for a moment that you're among the long-term unemployed. Imagine, too, that you're on the back nine of your career — say age 55 to 70.



(Photo: Thinkstock)

What barriers might you face when looking for a job? And what strategies might you use to get re-employed? Here's what experts say you need to do to land a job.

Use your network. "Most people have to work at finding a job, and the process can be long, arduous, and disheartening," wrote Gary Koenig, Lori Trawinski and Sara Rix, the authors of an [AARP Public Policy Institute \(PPI\) report](#). "Many efforts at re-employment never pay off. But some do."

Networking was an important tool, wrote the authors. For example, reaching out to their networks of contacts was viewed as the most effective step by the re-employed who took it: 68% said it was either "very or somewhat effective." Asking relatives and friends about job opportunities was also effective: 58% said it was "very or somewhat effective." And 59% said contacting employers directly was "very or somewhat effective."

John Nelson, co-author of *What Color is Your Parachute? For Retirement*, agrees that networking is crucial. "Don't be a generic Baby Boomer applicant, competing for open positions," says Nelson. "Most hiring managers are younger than you are, and naturally choose younger candidates. Unfortunately, the deck is stacked against you." Tactics that weren't effective: Checking online and print newspaper want ads; attending job fairs and visiting a public employment agency.

So what's your alternative? "Instead of searching for jobs, search your memory," Nelson says.

First, think of all the supervisors and co-workers you've had strong relationships with. "Make an actual list of names, without judging which might be helpful," says Nelson.

Second, search to see where they're working now, using Google or LinkedIn. "Most won't be relevant, but a few of them may be very interesting to you," says Nelson.

Third, do some research on their current company and position, to see where you might fit. "And finally, with an authentically warm and curious attitude, get in touch with these interesting contacts," says Nelson.

How is this a better approach? "Instead of being generic, you're one-of-a-kind," says Nelson. "Instead of competing, you're having a conversation. And instead of a younger hiring manager, you're talking with someone closer to your own age."

Don't procrastinate. Being unemployed doesn't mean you're on vacation. "Don't delay looking for a job, and be aggressive in your search," says Koenig.

Consider: The re-employed were more likely to begin their search sooner, according to the AARP report. The differences were significant. The re-employed (49%) were more likely to have begun their search immediately than the unemployed (35%).

Improve job skills. About one-third (31%) of those responding to the survey said they participated in training or education programs in the previous five years, according to the AARP PPI report. "Job training did help some job seekers, too, but it is important to make sure the classes are building skills that are actually needed in the local job market," says Koenig.

Get help. Some 45% of job seekers received some type of help during their job search, according to the AARP PPI report. Help with updating or writing a résumé was the most common reported.

Your age and discrimination. More than one-quarter (26%) of people responding to the AARP PPIU survey said employers thinking they were too old was a major barrier in finding employment. Plus, 18% of unemployed job seekers said they felt too old for available jobs.

Regrets? You'll have a few. Also, consider the regrets that the re-employed and still-unemployed survey respondents expressed. Forty-six percent wish they had been more aggressive with their job search. Many also wished they had saved more before becoming unemployed; gone back to school to complete or get another degree; or chosen another field.

Dealing with the barriers. So, how might you deal with these barriers and issues? Two tactics: One, broaden your job search by looking for a job in a different field, and two, look for a job with lower pay or benefits.

For his part, Art Koff, the founder of Retired Brains in Chicago, recommends looking for anything but a full-time job.

"We have found that employers are interested in hiring from this age demographic but generally on a part-time, temporary, seasonal or project basis," he says. "In most of these cases employers do not have to pay benefits, can hire out of a different budget and can both on-board and, more importantly, off-board with little or no expense by comparison to full-time employees."

Koff's advice to job seekers: Tell the recruiter or hiring manager that you would be pleased to work at-will, even when applying for a full-time job.

Read: [Tips to Help Boomers, Seniors and Retirees Find Jobs](#).

Read AARP's report: [The Long Road Back: Struggling to Find Work](#).

Advice for interviewing since many "older" job seekers have not interviewed in a long time and do not present themselves well. From RetiredBrains.com:

Assess your situation today vs. years ago.

Below are some questions you might ask yourself in preparation for a job interview.

Who am I, NOW?

What do I want?

What are my values?

Do I need to make a difference or make big bucks?

What are my core strengths?

Plan your interview and be prepared to present yourself.

Below are some questions and exercises that can also help you prepare.

Product: What skills and contributions do you offer?

Price: What is your value?

Promotion: What messages convey your skills?

Place: How will you get your message out?

Position: What differentiates you from others?

Present yourself with concrete examples of your role and accomplishments.

What was your role, title, team type and position within the team?

Examples of how to do so:

"As Director of _____ I ..."

"I was responsible for ..."

"As a member of the product team, I..."

"When I taught or instructed I ..."

What did you do?

"I created, led, initiated, designed, developed, simplified, organized, facilitated ..."

Examples:

"I developed a plan that ..."

"I created a process that ..."

"I led the team that ..."

What was the result of your efforts?

"I increased, improved, reduced, achieved ..."

Examples:

"I reduced vacancy rates 30%."

"I improved test scores by 20%."

"I achieved highest-ever attendance levels."

"I increased call efficiency by 10% for three consecutive quarters."

If you feel this is too much information to remember — as far as examples of work you've done as they relate to the position — practice explaining them with a friend or family member before your next interview.