

## Jobseeker's Guide to Job Searching During a Pandemic

Offered by CareerPRO Resume Center

Unemployment numbers are expected to continue to fluctuate through the end of 2020 and into 2021. While the pandemic is new, looking for work in a challenging job market is not. You can supplement some of the “tried and true” job search techniques with special strategies that are necessary because of COVID-19. But there are no hard and fast rules for a job search in a pandemic, so be flexible!

Even if you are currently employed now, some companies have announced further layoffs and furloughs as the pandemic stretches into late 2020. It's important to be prepared for what's next. This means updating your résumé and LinkedIn profile and taking the time to track and document your accomplishments.

In addition, it may be useful to take some time to analyze your transferable skills and experience, particularly if you are in an industry that has been negatively affected by the pandemic.

Some things about the job search are the same:

- Companies are still looking to hire problem solvers
- It's important to use your network in your job search, as your contacts can help you identify unadvertised job opportunities and connect with hiring managers
- Having an accomplishment-focused, up-to-date résumé and LinkedIn profile can help you secure interviews

However, some things are different in a job search during the pandemic:

- Interviews for job opportunities are more likely to be virtual (rather than in person)
- Human resources staffers are likely to be working remotely, and coordinating the hiring process can take more time than it did before the pandemic
- Opportunities for remote work are increasing, and if you are able to do your job remotely, there are even more opportunities, especially outside your current geographic area
- Temporary and short-term positions may be more plentiful. Companies may be wary of taking on permanent, full-time employees when their future is uncertain, but they still have needs to fulfill

One important thing to remember: Don't automatically discard the things that worked for you before in your job search. If you have had success previously with a specific tactic — for example, working with recruiters, or tapping into the hidden job market, don't write them off just because there is a pandemic.

### “No One Is Hiring”

Your mindset is especially important when searching for a job during a pandemic. Companies are still hiring new employees. Want proof? Search for openings on job aggregator sites like Indeed.com, SimplyHired, or Monster. Check out the “Jobs on Facebook” feature (<https://www.facebook.com/jobs/>) or LinkedIn Jobs (<https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/>). You'll see hundreds of open opportunities.

Companies in the shipping/delivery field are hiring, as are grocery stores and many healthcare facilities, including pharmacies. Information technology and technical support positions are also in high demand, as employees need more assistance with their computers and other devices when working from home.

Look for companies that are meeting pandemic-specific needs. These companies are now hiring for temporary, part-time, and short-term opportunities.

However, some industries are struggling. For example, hospitality companies — restaurants, airlines, resorts, hotels, and conference centers. Almost everything related to the entertainment industry has been affected. Colleges and universities are facing budget cuts as students defer returning to campus until the pandemic ends.

Government organizations — often some of the steadiest employers — are also facing shortfalls affecting employment and hiring.

Even in companies that are hiring, there may still be uncertainty. The hiring timeline has grown longer in some cases. If the company is conducting multi-person interviews, it may take time to coordinate schedules so all the panelists are available at the same time. Some jobs openings may be put on hold temporarily as situations change in the business. You may even have a job offer rescinded if a company's fortunes suddenly change.

If you're currently unemployed, your next job may not be a full-time or permanent position. It may not be your dream job. But a short-term or temporary position may make it easier for you to weather the pandemic and be in a position to get a new role in the future. It's often easier to get a job when you already have one. And some temporary and short-term roles may turn into permanent positions once the economy ramps back up again.

You may also find yourself temporarily changing fields during the pandemic. Is there a way you can use your existing skills in a new industry in the short term? For example, if you were a server in a restaurant, can you use your communication skills to work a remote customer service job? Or if you were an event coordinator for a hotel/conference center, could you use your project management capabilities to manage scheduling for a hospital?

### **If You're Furloughed**

The pandemic caused a number of companies to furlough employees. Many of these companies continue to pay employee benefits (such as health insurance) but the furlough allows workers to apply for unemployment.

If you're still on furlough, develop a job search strategy in case your position is permanently eliminated. Start working now on updating your job search documents (résumé, cover letters, LinkedIn profile, etc.). so you can immediately start applying for positions if you find yourself without a job.

With the end of the enhanced unemployment benefits, if you are still furloughed, you may be considering short-term or part-time work. Research your state's unemployment benefit requirements to determine how this work may affect your benefits.

### **Five Keys to Success for a Job Search During a Pandemic**

These tips will help you as you conduct your job search:

#### *Focus on Your Strengths*

Companies hire employees who can solve problems for them. Sales people create revenue. Accountants ensure compliance with regulations and provide financial data that can be used for decision-making. Customer service staff help answer questions, keeping customers happy. Beyond what you *do* for a company, what is the impact that you have on the organization?

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It's even more important to highlight accomplishments on your résumé, LinkedIn profile, and career documents in a competitive job market.

Shift your skills, if necessary, to a new field. Assess your work history and identify older skills and/or experience you can leverage. Seek out opportunities for additional training and learning.

#### *Be Clear on What You Need*

The more specific you can be about the opportunity that you're seeking, the more likely you will find it. Take some time to define what you're looking for in your next job. Are you looking for a position that allows you to work remotely? Do you have a specific schedule you need — for example, because your children are engaging in remote schooling? Having a list of criteria like this can help you identify whether a position will be a good fit — or not.

#### *Look For Companies That are Hiring or In Need*

Be aware of which industries are holding steady or growing during the pandemic, and which ones are struggling. Focus on essential companies that are not affected by government shutdowns. Create a target list of companies. Researching your prospective employer is even more critical — be aware of changes affecting the company due to the pandemic. Set up Google Alerts to get informed about news affecting your ideal employers. Follow your target companies on LinkedIn. Subscribe to the company's emails, blog, and social media channels.

#### *Nurture Your Network*

Networking is even more important for a job search during times of high unemployment. Meeting face-to-face or for coffee may not be an option right now, but you can connect virtually. Stay in touch through social media, phone calls, Zoom or FaceTime, email, text, and LinkedIn messages.

#### *Adapt to the New Needs of the Job Search*

Prepare for an online job interview. Set up a specific space for the interview. Make sure it's someplace quiet with no distractions. Conduct a practice session with a friend on Zoom. When it's time for the actual interview, dress like you're going to an in-person interview (head to toe!).

Don't be surprised if you don't hear back from the interviewer right away. Be patient. The hiring process will likely take even longer than normal. That's true even if the company initially seemed in a hurry to hire. Do follow up, but don't be a pest. Ask how the person is doing, and if there's anything they need from you to move the process along.

If you do have a job offer that is put on hold, consider asking if you could work in a contract or temporary role in the meantime. For example, one national furniture rental company is currently in a hiring freeze, but they are staffing with contract/temporary workers in the meantime.

One advantage of job searching during a pandemic is that it may be easier to interview because remote interviews can be done at any time. You don't have to drive somewhere and wait in an office for the

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interviewer. You can have your notes in front of you that you can reference easily. And, if the interview is by phone (and not by Zoom or Skype), you don't have to dress up or worry that you're making sufficient eye contact with the interviewer.

Companies that are hiring are pivoting to meet jobseekers where they are. Most job fairs have gone online, allowing you to participate remotely. Some companies are doing Zoom "meet and greets," allowing prospective employees to interact with company representatives virtually.

Should you be searching for a new job now? If you're in an industry affected by the pandemic, the answer is likely yes. If you're in an industry that is currently in a hiring freeze, lay the groundwork so you're prepared to make a change once the pandemic ends.

Even if you're not interested in changing jobs right now, create a plan for the future. Some things about the job search — for example, virtual job interviews — are likely to stick around long after COVID-19 is gone.

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