

Returning to work? A how-to checklist

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The Job Market is a store with a revolving door. People go in, people come out. Every day, for a variety of reasons, people change their work situations. Common reasons for entering/leaving the market include: demands of child care, parental care, or personal illness; pursuing further education or training; spouse's relocation, company relocation or bankruptcy. The list goes on. The question is, once I've left the workforce, how do I get back in? My friend KT asked that question today. She said, "What I really need is a checklist." So, for KT and everyone in her situation, here is that checklist:

#1 Link In: whether you have a robust career history or you're just getting started, let's agree on two things. First, you have not been living under a rock during your unemployed years. Second, you have not been living alone in the world. You know a few things and you know a few people. Get on LinkedIn (it's free) and create a profile. Then connect with friends and join some groups. Your LinkedIn presence will expand from there, mostly organically. Your job is going to come from someone who knows you or knows of you, so remind people, through LinkedIn, that you are out there.

#2 Start a blog: Your connections and your credibility, as well as your mental health, can benefit from your thoughtful comments. Choose a topic relevant to your personal or career interests. Follow other people's blogs. Don't be shy. No one will be watching you... at first. Your job is going to come from someone who knows you or knows of you, so it will be good to be known by people who share your interests.

#3 Write a resume: Write a letter to your best friend explaining each job you've had, what you did there and what you're most proud of accomplishing. Then remove the pronouns (the "I" and "me" words) and you will see your resume appear. Add your education and any technical skills to the list, and you're done. People who are in a position to help you will want to see your resume. Be ready.

#4 Tell your friends: Create a list of friends, relatives, past associates and networking groups and let these people know you want to buy them coffee. You do. Because you want to know about their work and their goals. This will lead them naturally to think of who you should talk to about your own goals.

Your job is going to come from someone you already know, or someone they know, so start talking to people, connecting with people and letting people help you. The job market has a revolving door; start pushing forward. You won't always be on the outside looking in.

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