10 Tips for Reinventing Your Career

In a job market where competition is fierce, it’s already hard to find the right position. Trying to change careers can be even more challenging.

Whether you’re making a career change by choice or out of necessity, you can take steps to help ensure a smooth and successful transition. AARP is here to help with a variety of resources, like www.aarp.org/WorkResources, which has plenty of information on finding a job or starting your own small business.

Follow these 10 tips to help you structure your job search and make a successful transition to a new career.

Tip 1: Inventory your skills.
Draw four columns on a sheet of paper. In the first column, make a list of all of your skills, including those learned on the job, acquired through volunteering or in school, and skills that are simply part of who you are.

This will help you uncover skills you might otherwise overlook, either because you didn’t use them in your previous work, or because you take them for granted.

Tip 2: Match your skills to outcomes.
For each skill identified in your inventory, list in the second column how you have applied it. In the third column, list the results of applying that skill. For example, let’s say one of your skills is project management. You could list “producing an event,” for example, in the second column, and “came in under budget” in the third column. Now you have a document that defines you by a set of skills rather than just by your experience.

Tip 3: Identify jobs that need your skills.
In the fourth column, identify jobs that require the skills you possess. This will help you identify roles that may interest you and where you can capitalize on your skills. The stronger the connection between your skills and potential jobs, the higher the chance you’ll land an interview.

Tip 4: Create résumés based on your skills.
Once you’ve identified jobs that match your skills, create multiple résumés aimed at those jobs, so each one you send is targeted to a specific opening.

» Include key words or industry-specific terminology from the job description in each résumé.

» Focus on your skills, how they have been applied and subsequent outcomes, rather than just a tally of your experience.

» Visit www.aarp.org/WorkResources for help creating résumés, cover letters and more.

Tip 5: Practice for interviews.
In preparation for interviews, practice articulating your background as a set of skills. Rehearse how you will convey your personal brand to help you sell your talents and skills. Check out AARP’s tip sheet on creating a personal brand at www.aarp.org/WorkResources.

Tip 6: Update your look.
Make sure your appearance reflects current styles. Consider buying a new interview suit or
updating your hairstyle to ensure your appearance reflects someone who is ready to compete in today’s work environment.

**Tip 7: Network.**

Use in-person and social media networks like [www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com) and [www.LifeReimagined.org/Work](http://www.LifeReimagined.org/Work) to find people you know that can help you identify positions that match your skills.

**Tip 8: Manage your finances.**

Reduce spending and monitor your cash flow if the job search takes longer than expected or if you think you might experience a salary cut when you change careers. If you’re unemployed, consider taking part-time or freelance work to learn new skills, generate income and stay busy.

**Tip 9: Exercise.**

Stay active with your exercise of choice to stay fit and healthy and, importantly, to reduce stress. Changing careers is an excellent time to develop a healthier lifestyle – it will show in your appearance and energy level.

**Tip 10: Join a support group.**

Vent frustrations in a safe, confidential and supportive environment – not with your professional network and never online.

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**The Job Search Has Changed and So Can You**

If it’s been awhile since your last job search, some aspects of the search and recruitment process have likely changed.

» The new human resources manager is you. It’s up to you to identify hiring managers and present yourself to them as uniquely qualified for the job at hand.

» Your job search will likely take place online. Recruiters use technology to search résumés for key words and screen candidate profiles and will likely correspond via email for status updates.

» Expect hiring managers to be younger and well versed in the latest technology. Present yourself as tech savvy. Have a professional email address (e.g. JaneDoe@gmail.com) and profiles on LinkedIn ([www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com)) and Twitter ([www.Twitter.com](http://www.Twitter.com)) can help.

**Take Action!**

- Use the four-column process to inventory your skills and match them to jobs of interest.

- Network in person and online. Set up profiles at [www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com) and [www.LifeReimagined.org/Work](http://www.LifeReimagined.org/Work) to help you make use of current connections and develop new ones.

- Use AARP resources at [www.LifeReimagined.org/Work](http://www.LifeReimagined.org/Work) and [www.aarp.org/WorkResources](http://www.aarp.org/WorkResources) for help with writing résumés, searching for jobs with employers who have committed to hiring experienced workers, and other resources to help in your transition to a new career.