



Job Tips for 50+ Workers

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How to Choose and Use a Career Counselor or Coach

Career counselors and coaches are professionals who charge a fee to work with clients to make their job search or career change more successful.

Counselor or Coach—What's the Difference?

There are small but significant differences between counselors and coaches:

- Career **counselors** hold advanced degrees, such as a Master's in counseling. Generally, they specialize in helping to determine appropriate career paths or overall strategy. Consider a counselor if you're at a crossroads, or if you want to understand your career goals better.
- Career **coaches** focus more on concrete steps to achieve a career goal or improve a certain skill, such as networking, interviewing or communication skills. They are goal oriented. They look for solutions and strategies from their clients.

How to Select a Career Professional

- Seek personal referrals from friends, relatives, and colleagues.
- Search the websites of the professional associations listed at the end of this tip sheet.
- Request free initial consultations with several professionals.
- Check out the credentials of the people you're considering.
- Request referrals from other clients.
- Decide if you are more comfortable conferring by phone, by email, or in person.

Walk away if you're promised a higher paying job, a dream job, or a better life style. No one can guarantee success!

Match a professional to your needs

Know what you want. Do you want help with the entire job-search process or just with a specific skill? Signs of a good match:

- The career professional helps you identify your unique skills and maximize your assets in finding a job.
- The professional has experience in working with 50+ individuals.
- You and the professional are partners in mapping out steps to reach your goals
- The contract between you and the professional specifies the outcome of your counseling, the time frame, and tools and materials that will be provided.

Fees

Look for a professional who charges by the hour or charges a monthly fee that covers several sessions. Many charge an average of \$100-\$250 an hour. It's typical to work in 30- to 60- minute increments for six to 10 sessions over three to six months.

Beware of advance-fee career marketing firms. Don't pay a large fee up front or sign a lengthy contract. You pay whether or not you get the job.

Manage Your Expectations

Career professionals aren't magicians. If you simply show up, pay, and wait for a job to land in your lap, you are almost certainly going to be disappointed. On the other hand, if you are putting in serious effort but are not seeing any changes within a month or so, it may be time to reevaluate.

Despite good will and hard work on both sides, a partnership with a career professional doesn't always work out. Do you try again? That's your call. Remember, success in landing a good job is up to you.

Professional Associations

Career professionals are not regulated. Anyone can call him or herself a counselor or coach. However, many are certified by professional associations:

- ACP International: The Association of Career Professionals International. www.acpinternational.org
- ICC International: The Institute of Career Certification International. www.careercertification.org/
- ICF: The International Coach Federation. www.coachfederation.org
- NBCC: The National Board of Certified Counselors. www.nbcc.org
- NCDA: The National Career Development Association. <http://ncda.org>

Your To-Do List

1. Be honest with your counselor or coach. Admit your weaknesses; share your dreams and build them into your plan.
2. Be specific about your goals. Don't waste time on generalities.
3. Be ready. Study the plan, review the deadlines, and fill in the gaps.
4. Be proactive. It's up to you to follow through with your plan.
5. Be thick-skinned. If a counselor challenges you, don't be defensive. You're paying for an objective point of view.

