Get “Unstuck” With a Career Professional

Do you feel “stuck” in your career? Maybe you’ve put 20 or more years into a career track that just isn’t satisfying anymore. Or maybe you’re one of the millions of Americans who are under- or unemployed as the economy struggles to regain its footing.

If you think it’s time for a change, consider working with a career counselor or a career coach. You can also take advantage of AARP’s free resources to help you find a job at www.aarp.org/WorkResources and at www.LifeReimagined.org/Work.

What Career Professionals Do

Career professionals help people get into the workforce, make career changes, deal with difficult workplace issues and more. The terms “counselor” and “coach” are often used interchangeably, but they are different.

» A career counselor helps their clients with the “big picture.” He or she can help you explore your skills and abilities and unearth what motivates you. They hold advanced degrees, typically in counseling, and certifications from professional associations.

» A career coach helps clients achieve a specific goal. People often turn to a career coach when they know what they want to accomplish, but need help doing it. The “it” could range from landing a job in a specific industry, to a résumé refresh, to improving communication skills.

You can work with a career professional by phone, email or in person. A typical arrangement is to have an in-depth conversation in person, and the remaining on a set schedule by phone. Career professionals typically charge by the hour or set a monthly fee. The average is about $160 an hour, but exact charges vary widely.

How to Choose a Career Professional

Here are some tips on finding a career professional:

» Ask friends, relatives and colleagues if they know and trust someone.

» Check out professional counseling and coaching associations online.

• The Association of Career Professionals International: www.acpinternational.org

• The Institute of Career Certification International: www.careercertification.org

• National Career Development Association: www.ncda.org

» Check their credentials and request referrals from other clients.

» Make sure the one you choose has experience working with people aged 50 and over.

Free or Low-Cost Resources

Other resources to help get your career moving include:

» Online tools. Check out www.aarp.org/WorkResources for tips on how you can use your experience to find a job you may like. Also, AARP’s Life Reimagined for Work website, www.LifeReimagined.org/Work, helps connect job seekers to companies that have signed a pledge stating they value experienced workers and treat all applicants fairly in the recruitment process.

» Job clubs and career workshops. Check
with your local library to find out if it offers workshops or hosts job clubs. Also check with local nonprofits or your place of worship.

» **Employee assistance programs at work.**
  If you’re currently employed, find out if you have access to an employee assistance program. It may offer career counseling or coaching.

A good counselor or coach can help you find the fortitude to forge a new career path – one that suits your skills and interests.

**Take Action!**

- Decide whether you need help with the big picture (counselor) or a specific task (coach).
- Get some names from friends, family and colleagues and then check out credentials at www.acpinternational.org, www.career-certification.org or www.ncda.org.
- Check out [www.aarp.org/WorkResources](http://www.aarp.org/WorkResources) and AARP’s Life Reimagined for Work at [www.LifeReimagined.org/Work](http://www.LifeReimagined.org/Work) for helpful resources for job seekers.

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