

Ask the Career Coach: Effective Unemployment

How should you spend your time while you're unemployed?

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

As appeared in MillburnPatch.com on April 13, 2010 (www.MillburnPatch.com)

Dear Career Coach Lisa,
How do I use my time wisely during a job search?

C.S.
Millburn

When you are in the job market, how you use your time to gain additional skills, build trusted relationships and engage in meaningful ways is important. The job market will always swing—currently in a downturn—and we need to plan for each cycle preferably while working. By plan, I mean in financial terms and thinking through what's next for you. Is it education, retraining, certification, new venture? Have both short and long term plans for your career.

One way to use your time wisely is to create a learning environment that is less formal than entering a certification or education program. Creating a learning environment can be as simple as a book club setting or a topical discussion that everyone brings information to share. When you are learning, you are able to see new perspectives and will help you when you are interviewing as well. Your answers will become more thoughtful.

Another way to use your time wisely is to volunteer. It can be with an organization relating to a cause you believe in or help you build skills needed for your next opportunity. Some volunteer opportunities exist online such as Volunteermatch.org, Taproot.org, Idealist.org, UrbanIntern.com, and internsover40.com and many other local organizations will have options to consider. Think about what skills and abilities you want to develop and then engage in an opportunity. Consider volunteering part time if you want to continue your job search.

The stigma comes into play when you are not comfortable or do not have a good story to tell during the time unemployed. In today's market, some individuals will hold it against you for being unemployed. Unless you are highly recommended by a respected colleague will you possibly interview with one of these individuals. Honestly, you cannot change other people, only yourself, so get comfortable with where you are. Live it, breathe it and feel good about what you are doing during your transition period.

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is www.ChenofskySinger.com.