

Career Rx

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Making Your Days Count

Creativity and entrepreneurship were important aspects during the Great Depression. Many inventions were discovered during this challenging economic time. Changing paradigms of the world lead some inventors to either help deal with the trying times or to explore new directions. Some examples of inventions from that time period include: the chocolate chip cookie, the board game Monopoly, the Laundromat, the electric razor, the car radio, and the supermarket.

The current economy and job market can be challenging for many. If you are unemployed, the news can be discouraging. For some people, having time to think allows their creativity to surface. When people are at work and subject to the daily urgencies of business life, they often think about what they would do if only they had the time. If you are unemployed, now is the time to retrieve those thoughts and consider acting on them, particularly those thoughts that will lead to enhancing your professional skills or developing new ones.

Recently, I appeared on NBC Nightly News "[Are today's unemployed tomorrow's unemployable?](#)" The show discusses how to avoid the perception that your skills have atrophied during a period of unemployment. While a subset of employers may feel that unemployed candidates are not current in their skills, it is their loss of not considering a rich pool of talent.

While employed or unemployed, it is important to manage your own development, staying on top of trends, technologies, and where the market is shifting. It is important to remember that just because your employment has ended, your career has not. Managing a career requires both short and long term planning. Investments made in your personal productive capacity during a period of unemployment can make you more effective at what you do when you re-enter the workforce. These investments include knowledge and skills but don't forget the benefits that physical well-being can add to your career both in terms of energy and longevity.

There are many ways to maintain and enhance skills and knowledge during this time. It is vital to your career and effectiveness that you pursue maintaining, developing and continue learning skills during unemployment. In past articles, I have described free opportunities to learn and maintain skills. Creating learning environments by attending free adult programs offered at libraries on topics that interest you, creating a book discussion group on a topic, listening to webinars offered through various associations, looking into lectures offered by the local museums, colleges and universities. This will enable you to gain new insights and will help you when you are interviewing as well. Your answers will become deeper and more thoughtful.

Another way to maintain and develop new skills is to volunteer. It can be with an organization you know or seek one out based on your interests. Some volunteer opportunities exist online such as www.Volunteermatch.org, www.Taproot.org, and www.Idealist.org to name just a few.

Another option is to consider an internship, review www.internsover40.com and www.UrbanIntern.com to get started. Think about what skills and abilities you want to develop and pursue them. Thinking outside the box can bring new opportunities to the table that may not have been considered in the past.

In today's market, some individuals will hold it against you for being unemployed. Unless you are highly recommended by a respected colleague, it may not be possible to interview with that company. 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. The stigma comes into play when you are not comfortable or do not have a good story to tell during a period of unemployment.

Instead of counting your days, make your days count. ~Author Unknown

Lisa Chenofsky Singer is the Managing Director of Chenofsky Singer and Associates LLC www.ChenofskySinger.com, providing Executive and Career Coaching and Human Resources Consulting.

Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.

Lisa's greatest strength is that she enables individuals and organizations to see themselves in new ways, freeing them to achieve their goals. Lisa can be reached at Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com.