

Steps to Getting Hired During A Pandemic

The labor market has given job seekers a serious case of whiplash. It wasn't long ago that applicants were getting multiple offers. Now, they are competing with millions of Americans who have lost their jobs after coronavirus shut down the economy.

1. Update your resume: Remember, your resume is not one-size-fits-all. Tailor it to match the job posting: Use the same words the employer uses when it comes to skills, experience and title. This can increase the chances that your resume will be selected by an applicant tracking system. It can also help your resume come up in any searches of the company's database when a job opens up in the future. Soft skills are also in demand, according to Salemi, so be sure to highlight things like your communication skills, and ability to be a team player, hit deadlines and meet deadlines. "You want to highlight your transferable skill set."

2. Tap your network. Think about what you are looking for in your next position and reach out proactively to people you think might be able to help with connections, an introduction or a potential referral.

3. Look who's hiring. There are some industries that are ramping up hiring. Do your research to see which companies are hiring, the skill sets they are looking for and how your experience can transfer to meet their needs.

4. Keep learning. Take this time to learn new skills. It will help you keep your resume sharp and give you something to point to during interviews to show you are motivated and eager to learn. "Any advantage to differentiate yourself is important, skill development helps differentiate," said Aman Brar, CEO of recruitment software company Jobvite.

5. Learn to sell yourself. When it comes to pitching yourself to potential employers, focus on your adaptability and confidence, recommended Brar.

"Take that utility player approach," he said. "Companies are dealing with so much uncertainty. They don't have the same predictably they use to have on how work gets done."

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Companies have enough on their plates right now -- they want to add staff that aren't going to cause new problems, he added. "Confidence is important as companies think about who they want on the ship on choppy waters," said Brar. Be ready to share real life examples that prove you have these traits -- and they don't have to be extreme. "People overestimate how grand these stories need to be," said Brar. "Look through your life's moments of distress and when you led clearly and confidently."

6. Don't hide your job loss. Once you get a call back, be transparent about your current job situation. The key is to acknowledge it and pivot. Salemi suggested saying something like: Yes, the pandemic shut down my company, but I am very interested in this position. I have these X,Y,Z skills that I know can contribute to your organization. And while a layoff can be hard to digest, don't dwell on it too long. "Develop some strategies to stay focused and calm," said Nicholas Wyman, CEO of the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation. "Don't get too emotional."

7. Ace the video interview. In-person interviews are tough, but video interviews can be even more nerve-racking because it's harder to establish a rapport and pick up on social cues.

Be overly prepared: test out your framing, audio and background well ahead of your interview. Dress as you would if the interview was done in person (that includes appropriate pants or a skirt -- you never know if you are going to have to get up to get something).

Show your engagement by nodding along and smiling -- maybe even more than you are used to. "It will be harder for them to detect your enthusiasm," said Salemi. "Look genuinely excited about this opportunity and show that you want to learn more."

That said, don't overdo it. "If you play it up too much, it can come off as inauthentic," she added.

8. Don't be scared to negotiate. When an offer comes in, make sure to get it in writing and review it to make sure it's in line with your expectations and market research.

"You should still negotiate. The worst they can do is say no," said Salemi.

However, if the numbers are way off it might not be worth it.

"It is more like fine tuning," said Brar. "If it's a \$50,000 opportunity ... and you are looking for \$100,000 I wouldn't bother."

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