

## **Career Detours**

With millions of people unemployed, it may seem like the best career management strategy is to hold onto the job you have—if you have one—and take whatever you can get if you're searching. That may be the right approach for some, but, even in this difficult market, jobseekers are finding positions that support their overall career strategy, even if it's a bit off their expected path.

If you are satisfied with your career direction but can't find the position you want right now, consider how a career detour could work for you. As opposed to a new path, a detour helps you reach your ultimate destination by temporarily leaving the most direct path where there are obstacles and obstructions.

## **Interim Career Strategies**

If your long-term career direction fits you well, an interim strategy can keep you on track while the labor market in your field improves. Consider these four interim career strategies.

1. **Contract work:** companies have reduced their regular work force (and the costs associated with benefits) and used contracted workers to complete special projects and unusual demands. Check with your former employer and similar companies for contract opportunities. This may be difficult if you've been laid off, but reminding your former employer how valuable you are is a good long-term career strategy.
2. **Skill building:** is this the time to go back to school? Are there workshops or seminars that will increase your employability? The detour through college, trade school or additional education positions you to return to your field stronger. You'll also build your network of people who can help you find available positions.
3. **Break down your skill set:** identify your transferable skills, those that are used in another industry or field. Use online resources, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's website <http://www.onetcenter.org> to search for other occupations that use the same skills.
4. **Relocate:** for some, relocation is not a good option, but for those who are able to consider moving to find their next great job, relocation can expand the target market and increase your prospects.

As you pursue an interim career strategy, stay focused on your long-term goals. Direct your job search toward positions that fit your strategy and enhance your skills and knowledge.

## **Maintaining Your Employability**

To be hired, you have to be seen. Maintain your visibility in your chosen career field while on your career detour. Stay involved with your professional association and networking groups. Participate in discussion boards and LinkedIn Groups. Prioritize the cost of memberships and meetings as vital career management expenses. Approximately 80% of positions are filled through connections, not job boards or advertisements. Invest in visibility in the right groups.

Become an expert in the future of your field. Study the relevant trends and developments. Read trade journals and publications. Attend meetings and conferences. Keep your skills strong and current. Adopt a learner's mind and design your own continuing education plan.

Find volunteer opportunities where you can use your skills to showcase your talent and make valuable connections. Add your volunteer experience to your resume. It will demonstrate to a future employer that you're serious about your career.

Maintain contact with your past employers and colleagues. Give and get information about your field or industry.

You may feel discouraged about taking a career detour but don't let it show as you network and interact with those who might help you find your ideal position. Disappointment and discouragement are typical responses to being laid off or otherwise unable to pursue your career path as you envisioned. Learn to manage those emotions and show yourself as emotionally mature and resilient. (Visit the Book Notes tab at [www.businessenergetix.com](http://www.businessenergetix.com) and read the summary of *Your Brain at Work*, by David Rock and *Social Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman for ideas on managing the thoughts and emotions that throw you off course.)

When you're on a highway detour, you have to watch for the directional signs that keep you moving in the right direction. It's equally important to read the signs on your career detour so you will arrive at your ultimate career destination, even though you've taken an alternate route.

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