

# The Workplace

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## A Fact Sheet

### Highlights

Questions to help you evaluate your career:

- What skills and abilities do you have to offer?
- Why are you looking for a job at this time, in this field, area, etc.?
- Have you remained current in your field?
- Does your work history show reliability and continuity?
- Do you have at least four good references?
- What would your former employers, particularly your last employer, say about your work performance?
- Do you want to stay in the same field; work the same number of hours; live in the same area; etc.?

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## Managing Involuntary Mid-Career Job Changes

Changing jobs is almost inevitable in today's workforce and is often a little scary no matter your age or educational level. Downsizing, eliminating positions or company closures account for many of the changes. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, workers completely change their professions at least three times during their working life and change jobs within the same profession even more frequently.

Some job changes may be voluntary. You may be unhappy with your present employer, or you have received additional education and/or training. In these instances, changing jobs may be eagerly anticipated because of the decision to do something more challenging and rewarding, viewing the change as an opportunity to advance.

Involuntarily changing jobs is especially difficult and is the focus of this fact sheet. The degree of anxiety accompanying being forced out of one job and then having to find another is almost proportionate to the number of years worked. In other words, the older you are the more traumatic the job change can be.

There are two categories of workers who involuntarily make mid-career job changes: 1) Those who have more than 10 but less than 20 years of service, and 2) those with more than 20 years of experience. Changing the kind of work you do is a big step, takes adequate preparation, and costs an investment of time. However, if you are in one of the two groups above, a few realities must be faced before moving to a new job or a new career:



"Maintaining a positive, forward-thinking outlook will impress prospective employers."

1. You may be bitter about being forced into mounting a job search at a time when you feel that you should be able to enjoy job security.
2. You may feel out of touch with today's workplace technology. This is especially true of individuals whose jobs were eliminated due to the revolutionizing of technology or a dying profession.
3. Employers may hesitate to hire an older worker because of the increased insurance expense and their years of experience often command a bigger salary.

The biggest obstacle most involuntarily separated workers regardless of age face, however, is attitude. Feelings of anger at, or of being wronged by, a former employer tend

to show through when interviewing for another job. Those who maintain a positive, forward-thinking outlook and who embrace today's world impress prospective employers and get hired.

**“Changing jobs  
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If asked to describe the perfect employee, most employers would say they look for motivated people with experience and confidence. They prefer individuals who are flexible and have a strong work ethic; some one they can depend

upon. These qualities often describe the mature worker who has 10, 20 or more years of work experience.

Regardless of age, making a significant career change is a big step. Successfully changing jobs or careers requires an investment of time and honestly evaluating your career. Here are a few questions and tips to help you:

1. What skills and abilities do you have to offer? Make a detailed list of skills that you have acquired either through formal training or as a result of on-the-job experience. Be sure to include skills learned through hobbies; and through community, civic & volunteer work.
2. Why are you looking for a job at this time, in this field, area, etc? Most employers will ask this or a similar type of question. Be prepared with a one or two sentence answer.
3. Have you remained current in your field? Do you need to take refresher courses or to enroll in some type of training? Make a list of all training received to date. Divide the list into formal coursework, on-the-job training, in-service training, and informal (such as self-help courses associated with hobbies or training received in relationship to professional or

trade associations).

4. Does your work history show reliability and continuity? Write down your employment history, beginning with the most recent. Give the title of your job, the name of the employer, and the beginning and ending dates of each job you have held.
5. Do you have at least four good references? As a courtesy, personally ask each individual you plan to use as a reference for his or her consent. Prepare a reference list that includes the persons name, his/her current position, address, and phone number.
6. What would your former employers, particularly your last employer, say about your work performance? If possible, gather documentation about your performance, i.e., formal performance appraisals or evaluations, personal commendations, awards, recommendations, etc.
7. Do you want to stay in the same field; work the same number of hours; live in the same area; etc? Make a list of the positive and negative reasons for continuing in the same field, to live in the same area, etc.

Answering these questions plus doing your homework will help you honestly assess your future job possibilities and develop a plan to find a job that is right for you. Before changing jobs, make sure the field you choose is one in which there will be jobs. Learn as much as you can about prospective career fields or employers by talking with people who are currently employed. Get the required training or skills **before** applying for a position.

When making a mid-career change, do not rule out starting your own business or becoming a consultant. These are rewarding options for persons who would like to be able to continue to work, but have more con-

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